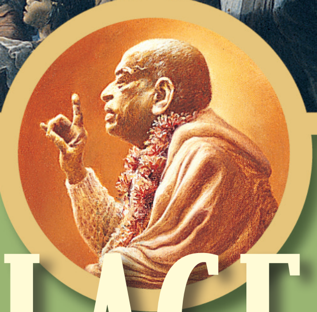
Godhead is light. Nescience is darkness. Where there is Godhead there is no nescience.

BACK TO GODHEAD



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SARANAGATI VILLAGE

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ALSO: Global Ecology and Human Psychology • The Glories of Sukatal
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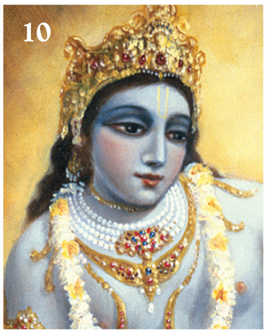
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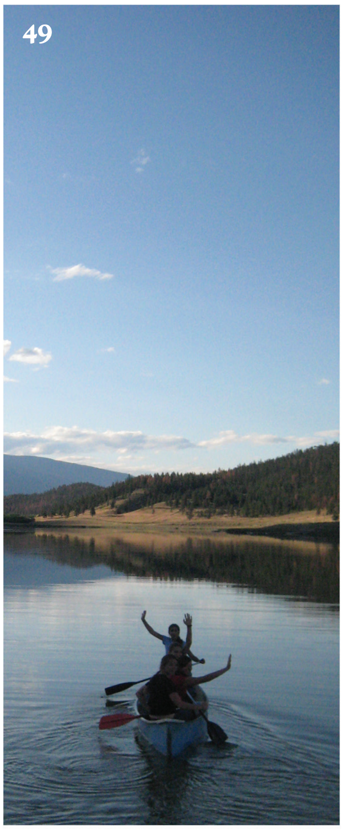
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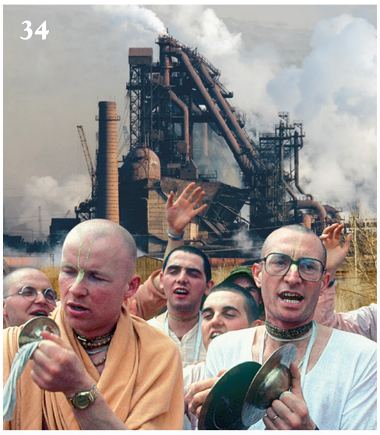
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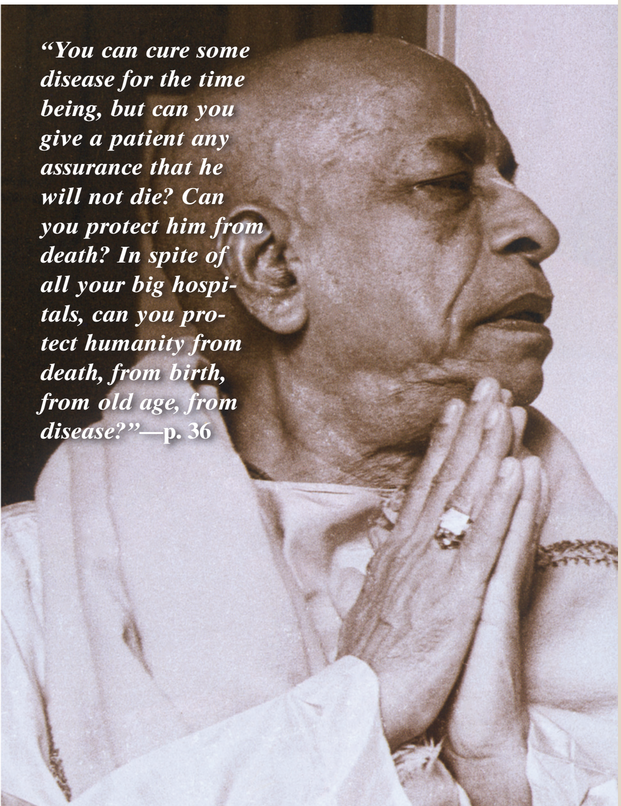
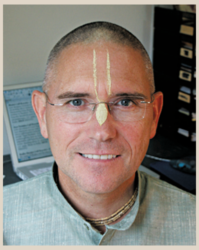
COVER Residents of Saranagati, the Hare Kṛṣṇa farm in British Columbia, Canada, are living close to the land, keeping Kṛṣṇa in the center, and striving to build a community based on the Vedic social model. See the article beginning on page 49. (Photo by Viśākhā Devī Dāsī.)



"You can cure some disease for the time being, but can you give a patient any assurance that he will not die? Can you protect him from death? In spite of all your big hospitals, can you protect humanity from death, from birth, from old age, from disease?"—p. 36

WELCOME



IN HIS LECTURE in this issue, Śrīla Prabhupāda tells the people of Sanand, India, to "Grow Food, Not Tobacco." His message: Live simply and use your time for spiritual pursuits.

Prabhupāda often spoke of his desire for his disciples to set up self-sufficient farm communities. Some are striving to do that in remote British Columbia, Canada. In "Paving the Way on Unpaved Roads," Yogīnātha Dāsa tells of the successes and challenges of living a Kṛṣṇa conscious life off the grid.

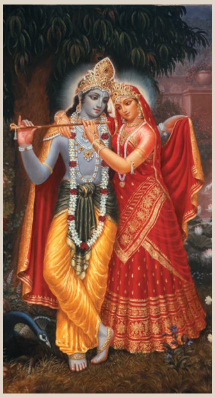
Prabhupāda pushed for farm communities mainly to aid our spiritual progress, but as one who saw everything as Kṛṣṇa's property, he also recognized the environmental benefits of living close to the land. In "Global Ecology and Human Psychology," Murāri Gupta Dāsa explains the environmental benefits of Kṛṣṇa consciousness by drawing the connection between our inner life and its effect on the outside world.

Our primary goal is not a healthy planet but a healthy consciousness linked to Kṛṣṇa in full self-surrender. As shown by Narasiṁha Swami Dāsa in "The Process of Surrender," that's the essential message of *Bhagavad-gītā,* which Prabhupāda brought to the West in the form of his *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is.* Satyarāja Dāsa tells the remarkable story of the publishing of that landmark edition of Kṛṣṇa's timeless teachings.

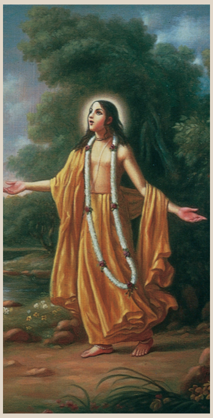
Hare Kṛṣṇa.—*Nāgarāja Dāsa, Editor*

OUR PURPOSES

- To help all people discern reality from illusion, spirit from matter, the eternal from the temporary.
- To expose the faults of materialism.
- To offer guidance in the Vedic techniques of spiritual life.
- To preserve and spread the Vedic culture.
- To celebrate the chanting of the holy names of God as taught by Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.
- To help every living being remember and serve Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Personality of Godhead.



Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa are together the one Supreme Absolute Truth.



Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the combined incarnation of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, inaugurated the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa five hundred years ago.

His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

BACK TO GODHEAD
The Magazine of the
Hare Krishna Movement

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Letters

Found God in the Gītā

My husband started reading the *Bhavagad-gītā* over two years ago. He was searching for God. He said he couldn't find the whole truth in the Christian religion. I was on the same search with him, and we just couldn't really find God wherever we looked. We even joined one church in hopes that somehow that door was a "way in."

After that hope died out, we faded from the religious path and almost came to a conclusion that God was whatever it was and one day after we died we would find out what it was—if it was. My husband then remembered that when he was seventeen, he had come across a *Bhagavad-gītā.* He said he tried to read it, but he was not capable of grasping it at that time. He said he knew he could recognize the name of the author (His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda) when he saw it. So he found the *Gītā* at the BBT (Bhaktivedanta Book Trust) site and bought it. He also bought the CD to listen to it while reading it. He then began praying and chanting, and I noticed he was beginning to change in a wonderful way. I decided to join him and see what he was learning.

Lo and behold, we found GOD! The absolute truth was in the words of the Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. We get up at five in the morning each day for prayer and chanting. We couldn't live without surrendering our day before it begins to the Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Kṛṣṇa is doing wonderful things in our lives. We are vegetarians, we have love for all of God's creations, we love Kṛṣṇa with all our heart, mind, and soul. We read or listen to the *Gītā* each day, but most importantly, we are involved in the service of the Lord. We give when and where He leads us to give.

Another thing we do is we buy the pamphlet *Kṛṣṇa: The Reservoir of Pleasure* in bundles of fifty and leave them wherever we go. We hand them out, and we mail them to churches. One Christian pastor wrote back and said we were going to burn in the lake of fire for eternity. My heart was saddened for him because he just does not know the truth. Anyway, we love Kṛṣṇa, and we love serving Him. In the love that is Kṛṣṇa, we are

Vanessa and Marlon
Via the Internet

Kṛṣṇa in the Workplace

Hare Kṛṣṇa! Thank you very much for the letters you published about giving Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the workplace ["In Your Own Words," Jan/Feb]. I found inspiration and new possibilities to talk about Kṛṣṇa at my workplace.

Judith Baarda
Holland

High Degree of Devotion

I was very much attracted and deeply touched in heart by reading the devotional article "Exemplary Service in a Humble Home" [Jan/Feb], about Satish and his family in Bombay. My special thanks to Murāri Gupta Dāsa for drawing every one of us to learn more about this high degree of devotion. And thanks to BTG for publishing such a nice issue.

Vijay Patel
Toronto, Ontario

Feeling Kṛṣṇa's Absence

I am a devotee of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, but I have days when I feel away from Him. I can't feel Him with me. I know He is always with me, but that whole day I am affected. I get very upset. I do chant His name. Please help me.

Kṛṣṇa Dāsī
Via the Internet

Our reply: It is not bad to feel that Kṛṣṇa is away from you. Great devotees in ecstasy sometimes lament in that way: "O my Lord, O most merciful master! O master of Mathura! When shall I see you again? Because of not seeing you, my agitated heart has become unsteady. What shall I do now?"

Here's a prayer that may make you feel better: "I know no one but Kṛṣṇa as my Lord, and He shall remain so even if He handles me roughly in His embrace or makes me brokenhearted by not being present before me. He is completely free to do anything and everything, for He is always my worshipful Lord unconditionally."

That is an exalted prayer, but we can benefit from it in a simple way. By uttering that prayer we inform Kṛṣṇa that no matter how He treats us, we are still interested in serving Him. By connecting with Kṛṣṇa through offering this very loving prayer, the feeling that Kṛṣṇa is not there will go away.

Also, by doing any form of devotional service, we come in touch with Kṛṣṇa, and thus the feeling that Kṛṣṇa is not there will disappear. Chanting the holy name, associating with Kṛṣṇa's devotees, reading *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam,* worshiping the deity with faith, and living in a holy place are five powerful ways to connect with Kṛṣṇa and transcend the feeling that He is not present.

What About the Women?

I detected the scent of gender bias in BTG's recounting of the early struggles in Russia [March/April]. Many women traveled by train alone and unprotected to all corners of Russia to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness. They too bravely confronted the KGB and endured severe hardship. One such woman is Yajña Dāsī, who made endless sacrifices and remains a dedicated and faithful servant to this day. (In her photo, on page 24, the caption refers to her as "this devotee.")

As an historical fact, when I joined in Moscow in 1979, Yajña's apartment served as central headquarters for the covert Hare Kṛṣṇa movement. All correspondence with the outside world originated there, traveling devotees were housed there, and plans for spreading the movement were hatched there. As a result Yajña was forever harassed and threatened and physically bullied by the KGB. I have a distinct memory of her defiantly slamming the door on the nose of an intruding KGB officer to allow time for devotees to cover up their operations.

In the spring of 1989, on the day of the first ever public *harināma* [chanting] in Moscow, we devotees were all quite nervous, fearful of what might happen. I remember Yajña's bold and reassuring words when she announced to the assembled Vaiṣṇavas, "I know exactly what's going to happen. We're going to go out there and save those fallen souls."

We all erupted with a "*Kī Jaya!*" and the rest is history.

Udārakīrti Dāsī
Saranagati, British Columbia

The reply to the letter from Kṛṣṇa Dāsī was written by Kṛṣṇa-kṛpā Dāsa. Please write to us at: BTG, P. O. Box 430, Alachua, FL 32616, USA. E-mail: editors@krishna.com.

CORRECTION

In the last issue, we neglected to credit the photographer for the photo on page 13 (Draviḍa Dāsa chanting). The photo was taken by Radhanatha Jakupko of Alachua, Florida.

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FOUNDER'S LECTURE

Sanand, India—December 27, 1975

GROW FOOD, NOT TOBACCO

Rather than waste land and energy to grow unnecessary things like tobacco, we should live simply and worship God with our work and the chanting of His holy names.

by His Divine Grace
A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda
Founder-*Ācārya* of the International Society
For Krishna Consciousness

---

annād bhavanti bhūtāni
parjanyād anna-sambhavaḥ
yajñād bhavati parjanyo
yajñaḥ karma-samudbhavaḥ

"All living bodies subsist on food grains, which are produced from rains. Rains are produced by performance of *yajña* [sacrifice], and *yajña* is born of prescribed duties."—*Bhagavad-gītā* 3.14

WHEN I WAS coming to your village, I saw that there are so many agricultural fields producing so much tobacco. Tobacco production can give you some money, but you will be short of food grains. Bhagavān, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, says that if you want to make the people in general

Bhārgava Dāsa

© Jonathan Souza | Dreamstime.com

happy and prosperous, then you must produce *anna,* food grains. Bhagavān has not said anywhere that you should produce tobacco, jute, and similar other things that are not required at all.

The whole purpose of life is to perform *yajña.* In the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* (3.8.9) there is a verse:

varṇāśramācāra-vatā
puruṣeṇa paraḥ pumān
viṣṇur ārādhyate panthā
nānyat tat-toṣa-kāraṇam

"The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Viṣṇu, is worshiped by the proper execution of prescribed duties in the system of *varṇa* and *āśrama.* There is no other way to satisfy the Supreme Personality of Godhead."

According to our work and our association with the modes of nature, we get different types of body.

In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (11.5.32) it is said,

yajñaiḥ saṅkīrtana-prāyair
yajanti hi su-medhasaḥ

"[In the Age of Kali] intelligent persons will worship the Lord with the *yajña* of chanting the holy names of the Lord." *Yajña* means to satisfy the *yajña-puruṣa:* Lord Nārāyaṇa, or Bhagavān. In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (7.5.31) Prahlāda Mahārāja says,

na te viduḥ svārtha-gatiṁ hi viṣṇuṁ
durāśayā ye bahir-artha-māninaḥ
andhā yathāndhair upanīyamānās
te 'pīśa-tantryām uru-dāmni
baddhāḥ

"Persons who are strongly entrapped by the consciousness of enjoying material life, and who have therefore accepted as their leader or guru a similar blind man attached to external sense objects, cannot understand that the goal of life is to return home, back to Godhead, and engage in the service of Lord Viṣṇu. As blind men guided by another blind man miss the right path and fall into a ditch, materially attached men led by another materially attached man are bound by the ropes of fruitive labor, which are made of very strong cords, and they continue again and again in materialistic life, suffering the threefold miseries." People do not know that the aim of life is to approach Lord Viṣṇu. In the *Purāṇas,* Lord Śiva instructs Pārvatī, *ārādhanānāṁ sarveṣāṁ viṣṇor ārādhanaṁ param:* "Of all types of worship, the worship of Viṣṇu is topmost." So human life is specially meant for worshiping Viṣṇu.

Unfortunately, the blind leaders are not teaching people how to execute *viṣṇu-ārādhana,* worship of Viṣṇu. This Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement was started just to educate people how to worship Lord Viṣṇu. That is our mission all over the world.

Kṛṣṇa says in *Bhagavad-gītā* (3.9),

yajñārthāt karmaṇo 'nyatra
loko 'yaṁ karma-bandhanaḥ
tad-arthaṁ karma kaunteya
mukta-saṅgaḥ samācara

"Work done as a sacrifice for Viṣṇu has to be performed; otherwise work causes bondage in this material world. Therefore, O son of Kuntī, perform your prescribed duties for His satisfaction, and in that way you will always remain free from bondage."

Karma-Free Work

Yajña means Viṣṇu. One should act simply to satisfy Viṣṇu. Any work one is habituated to do should be aimed at satisfying Viṣṇu. Otherwise we shall be implicated in the karma. Karma means we act in some way under the direction of material energy, or illusionary energy, and we become implicated. It is stated in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (13.22), *kāraṇaṁ guṇa-saṅgo 'sya sad-asad-yoni-janmasu:* According to our work and our association with the modes of nature, we get different types of body. If we give up *viṣṇu-ārādhana,* if we give up the aim of achieving the favor of Viṣṇu, then we become implicated in the resultant action of our different activities.

Kṛṣṇa therefore teaches,

yat karoṣi yad aśnāsi
yaj juhoṣi dadāsi yat
yat tapasyasi kaunteya
tat kuruṣva mad-arpaṇam

"Whatever you do, that doesn't matter, but the result should be given to Me." [Bg. 9.27] At the present moment in this age, all over the world people have forgotten Viṣṇu, or God. They are whimsically doing things that will implicate them birth after birth, *sad-asad-yoni-janmasu.* After death you will receive either a high-class birth or a low-class birth—*sat* or *asat.* But this is not the solution of life.

Everyone has a different type of occupation, as stated in the *Bhagavad-gītā: brahma-karma, kṣatriya-karma, vaiśya-karma,* or *śūdra-karma.* Generally, one works as a *brāhmaṇa,* a *kṣatriya,* a *vaiśya,* or a *śūdra.* Lord Kṛṣṇa says,

yataḥ pravṛttir bhūtānāṁ
yena sarvam idaṁ tatam
sva-karmaṇā tam abhyarcya
siddhiṁ vindati mānavaḥ

"By worship of the Lord, who is the source of all beings and who is all-pervading, a man can attain perfection through performing his own work." [Bg. 18.46] In the worship of Kṛṣṇa there is no restriction that only the *brāhmaṇas* can offer

(*please turn to page 48*)

Glossary

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Ācārya—a spiritual master who teaches by example.

Balarāma—Lord Kṛṣṇa's first expansion, who acts in the role of Lord Kṛṣṇa's elder brother.

Battle of Kurukshetra—an epic battle for rule of the world, fought five thousand years ago.

Bhagavad-gītā—the sacred book in which Lord Kṛṣṇa gives the essence of knowledge to His friend and disciple Arjuna.

Bhakti—devotional service to the Supreme Lord.

Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura—the spiritual master of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda.

Bhakti-yoga—linking with the Supreme Lord through devotional service.

Caitanya Mahāprabhu—the incarnation of Lord Kṛṣṇa who appeared five hundred years ago to teach the chanting of the names of God as the religion for the present age.

Darśana—"viewing," audience with a deity or saintly person.

Dharma—(1) ordained duties or religious principles; (2) one's eternal, natural occupation (i.e., devotional service to the Lord).

Godhead—the Absolute Truth, the Supreme Reality, progressively realized first as the impersonal all-pervasive oneness, more fully as the Supersoul within the heart of every living being, and ultimately as the all-opulent Supreme Person.

Gurukula—a school where children learn the philosophy and practices of Kṛṣṇa consciousness along with regular academic subjects (literally "the place of the guru").

Hare Kṛṣṇa—the great mantra Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

ISKCON—the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

Japa—individual chanting of names of God, usually while counting on beads.

Kali-yuga—in the endlessly repeated cycle of four cosmic ages, the present and worst age, the Age of Quarrel, of which 5,000 of 432,000 years have passed.

Karma—material action; its inevitable reaction; or the law by which such action and reaction are governed.

Kīrtana—congregational singing of names of God, usually accompanied by cymbals (*karatālas*) and drums (*mṛdaṅgas*).

Kṛṣṇa—the Supreme Personality of Godhead in His original transcendental form (see "Godhead").

Mahābhārata—the epic history of ancient India, a history in which the *Bhagavad-gītā* appears as the most important and well-known text.

Māyā—illusion; the energy of the Supreme Lord that deludes living entities into forgetting their spiritual nature and forgetting God.

Māyāvādī—one who regards the Abs ultimately impersonal.

Modes of nature—the three qualities (goo and ignorance) that hold sway over all action in the material world.

Nityānanda—the incarnation of Lord Balarāma who appeared with Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

Prasādam—vegetarian food that has been prepared for the Lord and offered to Him with devotion (literally "mercy").

Purāṇas—Vedic histories.

Rādhārāṇī—Lord Kṛṣṇa's consort and pleasure potency.

Rathayātrā—"chariot festival": a festival in which the form of Kṛṣṇa is borne in procession on a large canopy-topped chariot or float, especially the festival originating in Puri, India, for Jagannātha (Lord Kṛṣṇa, "the Lord of the universe").

Sannyāsa—the renounced life of a man who relinquishes home to dedicate himself fully to the Supreme.

Śrī—an honorific meaning "opulent" (similarly: Śrīla, Śrīmad, Śrīmān, Śrīmatī).

Śrīla Prabhupāda—His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, the founder-*ācārya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam—the most important of the eighteen *Purāṇas,* which tells of the nature and pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa and His devotees.

Supersoul—the form of the Lord who resides in every heart along with the individual soul.

Upaniṣads—the 108 essential philosophical treatises that appear within the *Vedas.*

Vaiṣṇava—a devotee of the Supreme Lord (from the word *Viṣṇu*).

Varṇāśrama—the Vedic social system. It organizes society into four occupational and four spiritual divisions (*varṇas* and *āśramas*). The members of the four *varṇas* are the *brāhmaṇas* (intellectuals and priests), the *kṣatriyas* (administrators and soldiers), the *vaiśyas* (farmers and businessmen), and the *śūdras* (laborers and artisans). The members of the four *āśramas* are the *brahmacārīs* (celibate students), *gṛhasthas* (married people), *vānaprasthas* (retired people), and *sannyāsīs* (renunciants).

Vedas—the hymns of knowledge revealed by the Lord Himself at the beginning of creation.

Vedic—pertaining to the culture in which the *Vedas* and related scriptures guide all aspects of human life.

Viṣṇu—any form of the Personality of Godhead (see "Godhead"); the forms the Lord manifests to create and sustain the material world.

Vṛndāvana—the transcendental abode of Lord Kṛṣṇa, mirrored on earth as the town in India where Kṛṣṇa appeared five thousand years ago.

The Process of SURRENDER

Lord Kṛṣṇa's main message in the Bhagavad-gītā *is clear: He wants us to fully surrender to Him.*

by Narasiṁha Swami Dāsa (Dr. S. G. N. Swamy, Ph.D.)

THE MOST VITAL part of the *Bhagavad-gītā* deals with the advice Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa gives to Arjuna on the surrendering process. One of the dictionary meanings of *surrender* is "to give (something) up voluntarily to another." Lord Kṛṣṇa's simple words of advice on surrendering are easy to understand. So why do most people, including those of us practicing Kṛṣṇa consciousness, not fully surrender to the Lord? We are practicing spiritual life in the material world, a prison created by the Lord to reform us and to help us surrender to Him. Kṛṣṇa is very keen to get us back home, back to Godhead. But are we so keen?

In Chapter 7, Text 14, Kṛṣṇa says,

daivī hy eṣā guṇa-mayī
mama māyā duratyayā
mām eva ye prapadyante
māyām etāṁ taranti te

"This divine energy of Mine, consisting of the three modes of material nature, is difficult to overcome. But those who surrender unto Me can easily cross beyond it." Kṛṣṇa has elaborated on the three modes of material nature—goodness, passion, and ignorance—in Chapter 14. When we are in contact with the material energy and become victims of these three modes, we are called "conditioned." These modes bind us. Most people do not even know this. Hence they cannot understand what surrender really means. Kṛṣṇa calls such persons grossly foolish.

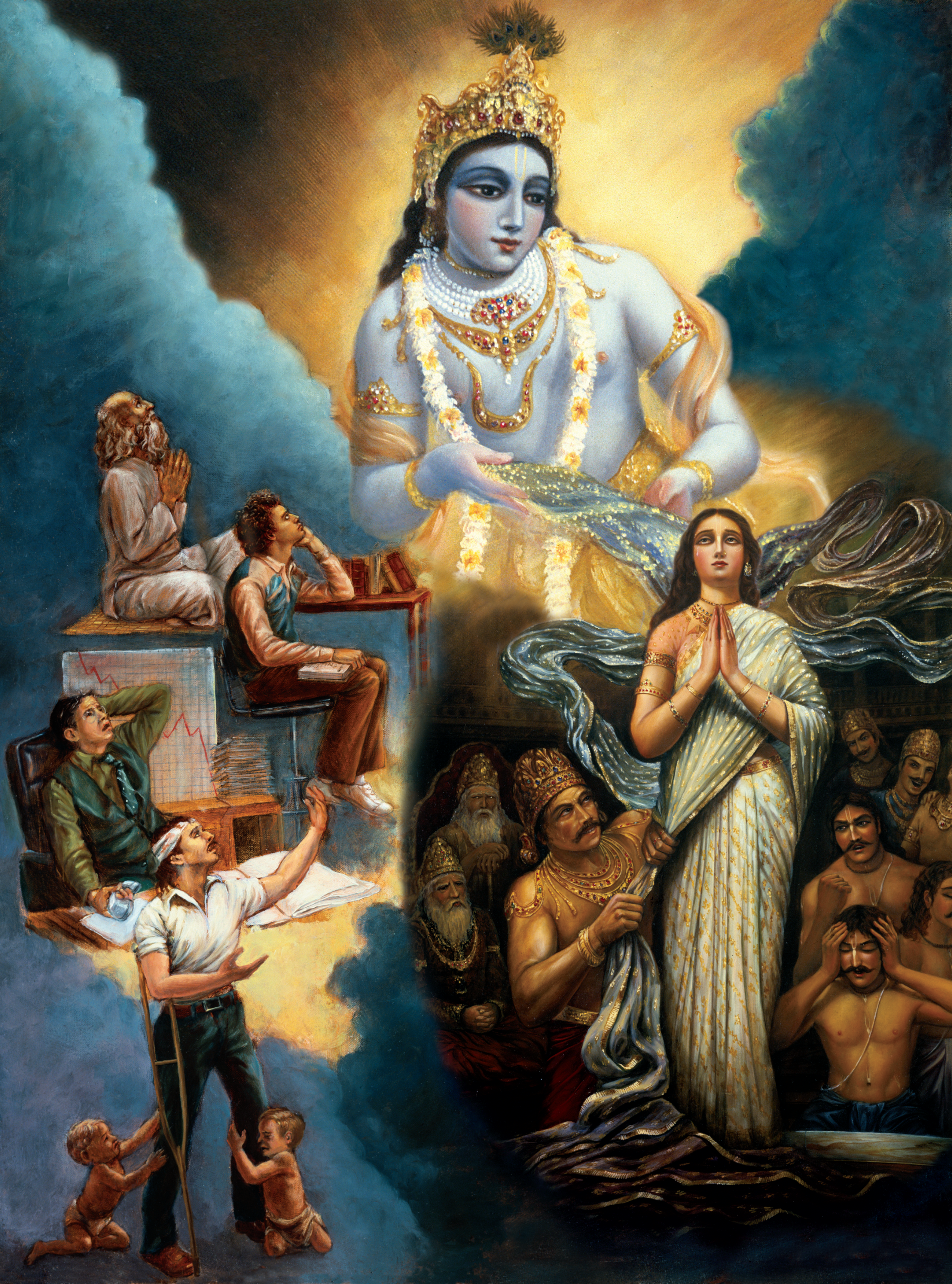
Why do even the most educated scholars and leaders not surrender to Kṛṣṇa? Because they are bewildered by atheism in many forms. They are not *sukṛtinaḥ,* the pious souls Kṛṣṇa refers to in Chapter 7, Text 16:

catur-vidha bhajante māṁ
janāḥ sukṛtino 'rjuna
arto jijñāsur arthārthī
jñānī ca bharatarṣabha

"O best among the Bhāratas, four kinds of pious men begin to render devotional service unto Me—the distressed, the desirer of

Right: Lord Kṛṣṇa values the piety of the four kinds of persons who approach Him with material motives. But ultimately He wants our full surrender, like that shown by Draupadī when Duḥśāsana tried to undress her in the royal assembly.

Paintings by Dīrghā Devī Dāsī and Rāmadāsa Abhirāma Dāsa. Montage by Yamarāja Dāsa.



wealth, the inquisitive, and he who is searching for knowledge of the Absolute."

Atheists do not seek refuge in God. But Kṛṣṇa classifies four types of persons who take refuge for some benefits in return for their devotion to Him. He recognizes all these people as pious and deserving candidates for surrendering to Him. They are God conscious but are more interested in meeting their personal material goals than in readily surrendering to Kṛṣṇa.

In *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* (1.1.11) Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī distinguishes devotees who seek Kṛṣṇa without expecting any benefits in return, terming them pure devotees:

anyābhilāṣitā-śūnyaṁ
jñāna-karmādy-anāvṛtam
ānukūlyena kṛṣṇānu-
śīlanaṁ bhaktir uttamā

"One should render transcendental loving service to the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa favorably and without desire for material profit or gain through fruitive activities or philosophical speculation. That is called pure devotional service."

Śrīla Prabhupāda compares mixed and pure devotees: "When these four kinds of persons [mentioned above] come to the Supreme Lord for devotional service and are completely purified by the association of pure devotees, they also become pure devotees."

Even when people come to Kṛṣṇa with ulterior motives, they can become pure devotees if they continue to pursue Kṛṣṇa consciousness and cultivate the association of devotees.

When I visited the Śrīnivāsa Temple in Malibu, near Los Angeles, an Indian businessman had come to the temple with plenty of fruits and flowers.

Handing these to the priest before the *ārati,* he told him, "Please pray that my new business venture becomes successful."

The priest, a pious Śrī Vaiṣṇava devotee, replied, "How can we ask for that? What to give or not to give is dependent entirely on Kṛṣṇa. So we must leave it to Him instead of asking."

Pure devotional service means to understand the Absolute Truth and become free from all material desires.

Kṛṣṇa says in Chapter 7, Text 19,

bahūnāṁ janmanām ante
jñānavān māṁ prapadyate
vāsudevaḥ sarvam iti
sa mahātmā su-durlabhaḥ

"After many births and deaths, he who is in actual knowledge surrenders unto Me, knowing Me to be the cause of all causes and all that is. Such a great soul is very rare."

A Message for Everyone

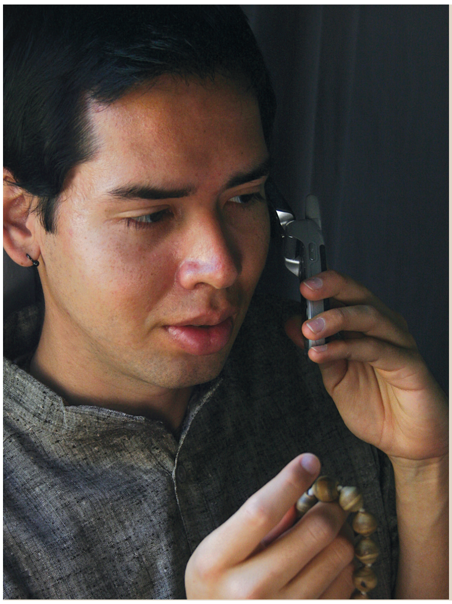
Though seemingly addressed to Arjuna, *Bhagavad-gītā* is a message to all to surrender to Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa gives full importance to the minute independence we have inherited from Him as His parts. He opens up all possible paths one can take to come to Him directly or indirectly. At the same time, He ultimately gives His opinion on the best method to reach Him: the surrendering process.

Kṛṣṇa explains the surrendering process in Chapter 15, Text 5:

nirmāna-mohā jita-saṅga-doṣā
adhyātma-nityā vinivṛtta-kāmāḥ
dvandvair vimuktāḥ sukha-duḥkha-
samjñair
gacchanty amūḍhaḥ padam
avyayaṁ tat

"Those who are free from false prestige, illusion, and false association, who understand the eternal, who are done with material lust, who are freed from the dualities of happiness and distress, and who, unbewildered, know how to surrender unto the Supreme Person attain to that eternal kingdom."

Kṛṣṇa lays down the conditions under which one can surrender to



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Him and go back home, back to Godhead. Pride, lust, unfavorable association, material conditioning, and the dualities of happiness and suffering are all impediments to the surrendering process. The practitioner of devotional service must practice with care in order to gradually abandon the unfavorable characteristics listed by Kṛṣṇa. The surrendering process starts with self-appraisal. That is the beginning of renunciation both internally and externally.

Preparing the devotee Arjuna for total surrender, Kṛṣṇa elaborates on the surrendering process in Chapter 18, Text 65:

man-manā bhava mad-bhakto
mad-yājī māṁ namaskuru
mām evaiṣyasi satyaṁ te
pratijāne priyo 'si me

"Always think of Me, become My devotee, worship Me, and offer your homage unto Me. Thus you will come to Me without fail. I promise you this because you are My dear friend." Here Kṛṣṇa summarizes the process of surrender required of us to become His pure devotee. He gives the method to make Him the center of one's life.

In Chapter 18, Text 66, Lord Kṛṣṇa asks Arjuna to completely surrender to Him:

sarva-dharmān parityajya
mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja
ahaṁ tvāṁ sarva-pāpebhyo
mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ

"Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender unto Me. I shall deliver you from all sinful reactions. Do not fear." This advice is Kṛṣṇa's summary conclusion on *Bhagavad-gītā* after He has explained *karma-yoga, jñāna-yoga, dhyāna-yoga,* and various processes of meditation, sense and mind control, and so on. This is the key text to show the Lord's protection of devotees and the process of surrender. *Mām ekam:* the emphasis is surrender *only* to Him.

Examples from Scripture

From the scriptures, especially *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and *Mahābhārata,* we are aware of the histories of pure devotees who have shown us the way of total surrender to Lord Kṛṣṇa. When Duḥśāsana tried to disrobe Draupadī, she held on to her sari with her own strength. She wanted to save herself from disgrace in the assembly. Only when her full endeavor could not help her anymore did she lift both hands and surrender to Kṛṣṇa, begging Him to save her. That was her expression of total surrender.

The surrendering process starts with self-appraisal. That is the beginning of renunciation both internally and externally.

The scriptures also give the surrendering histories of devotees such as Bali Mahārāja, Ambarīṣa Mahārāja, and Gajendra. They are all our role models for the surrendering process.

Surrender Made Easier

The renunciation expected for full surrender appears difficult, especially in this age. Foreseeing this situation, Kṛṣṇa appeared in the fifteenth century in devotee form as Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu to simplify the process of surrender. He focused on chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

Caitanya Mahāprabhu taught His associates and devotees the process of surrender to Kṛṣṇa through deity worship, congregational chanting, honoring *kṛṣṇa-prasādam,* associating with like-minded devotees, hearing and reciting scriptures like *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and *Bhagavad-gītā,* and searching for Kṛṣṇa like a child crying for its mother. Śrīla Prabhupāda publicized this process and made it accessible through his books.

Drawing from Śrīla Prabhupāda's books, we can understand that for devotees on the path of *sādhana-bhakti* (devotional service in practice) who want quick advancement in spiritual life, surrender means:

1. To give ourselves completely to Lord Kṛṣṇa and depend entirely on Him for protection.
2. To have full confidence that under any circumstances Kṛṣṇa will protect us.
3. To be ready to accept all that is ordained for us and all karmic reactions, whether desirable or undesirable.
4. To realize that the real doer is Kṛṣṇa and that we depend on Him for any results.
5. To understand fully that Kṛṣṇa is the infinite controller and that we are His infinitesimal controlled parts.
6. To realize that we are not the body but the spirit soul.
7. To accept that Kṛṣṇa is the master and we the servitors.
8. To follow the instruction of Kṛṣṇa that we should accept a bona fide spiritual master in the succession as Kṛṣṇa's representative and surrender to him and serve him with utmost humility. ✿

Narasiṁha Swami Dāsa is a disciple of His Holiness Jayapatāka Swami. He served at ISKCON Indonesia for about sixteen years and for the last nine years has served at ISKCON's Śrī Jagannātha Mandir in Bangalore, where he lives with his wife Vatsala Rādhā Devī Dāsī.

SPIRITUAL PLACES

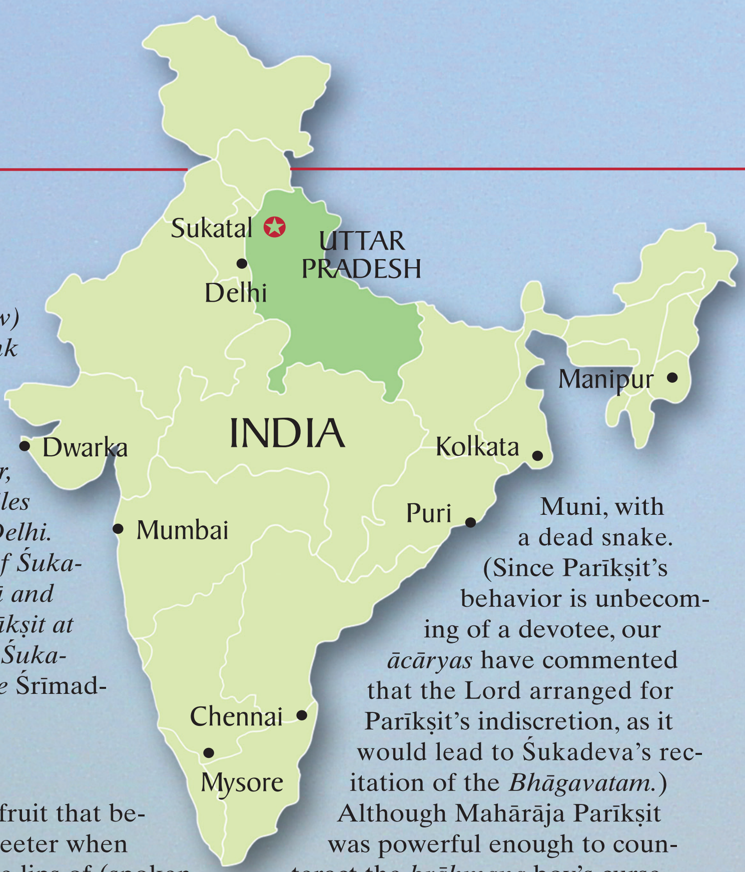
The Glories of SUKATAL

The site where Śukadeva Gosvāmī spoke Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam *brings to mind Caitanya Mahāprabhu's contribution to our understanding of this great work.*

by Bhakti Vikāśa Swami

photos by Adbhuta Hari Dāsa

श्री शुकदेव जी राजा परीक्षित
श्री राम कथा



WE'VE COME TO Sukatal to remember and glorify Śukadeva Gosvāmī, Parīkṣit Mahārāja, and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.* We will value Sukatal to the degree to which we have studied and developed appreciation for *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.*

Sūta Gosvāmī began his narration of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (1.2.2–3) to the sages at Naimisharanya by glorifying his spiritual master, Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī, who had spoken *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* here to Parīkṣit Mahārāja in the presence of great sages. Śukadeva Gosvāmī, described as the guru of all those present, disclosed the message of the *Bhāgavatam*—the most confidential supplement to the *Vedānta-sūtra,* considered the cream of Vedic knowledge. After having assimilated this knowledge, Śukadeva spoke out of great compassion for the materialists. Śrīla Vyāsadeva described *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* as the ripe fruit of the tree of Vedic knowledge, a fruit that became even sweeter when touched by the lips of (spoken by) Śukadeva Gosvāmī.

Śukadeva came to speak the *Bhāgavatam* at Sukatal because Parīkṣit Mahārāja, the world emperor, was cursed to die within seven days by the bite of Takṣaka, a snake-bird. Parīkṣit was cursed by the *brāhmaṇa* boy Śṛṅgi, who felt offended when Parīkṣit garlanded his father, Śamīka Muni, with a dead snake. (Since Parīkṣit's behavior is unbecoming of a devotee, our *ācāryas* have commented that the Lord arranged for Parīkṣit's indiscretion, as it would lead to Śukadeva's recitation of the *Bhāgavatam.*)

Although Mahārāja Parīkṣit was powerful enough to counteract the *brāhmaṇa* boy's curse, he accepted it as the Lord's mercy to detach him from his home, wife, and kingdom and allow him to concentrate on his real interest in life: Kṛṣṇa. Mahārāja Parīkṣit's response to the curse shows him to be a pure devotee of the Lord.

Parīkṣit Mahārāja came here to the bank of the Ganges to fast till

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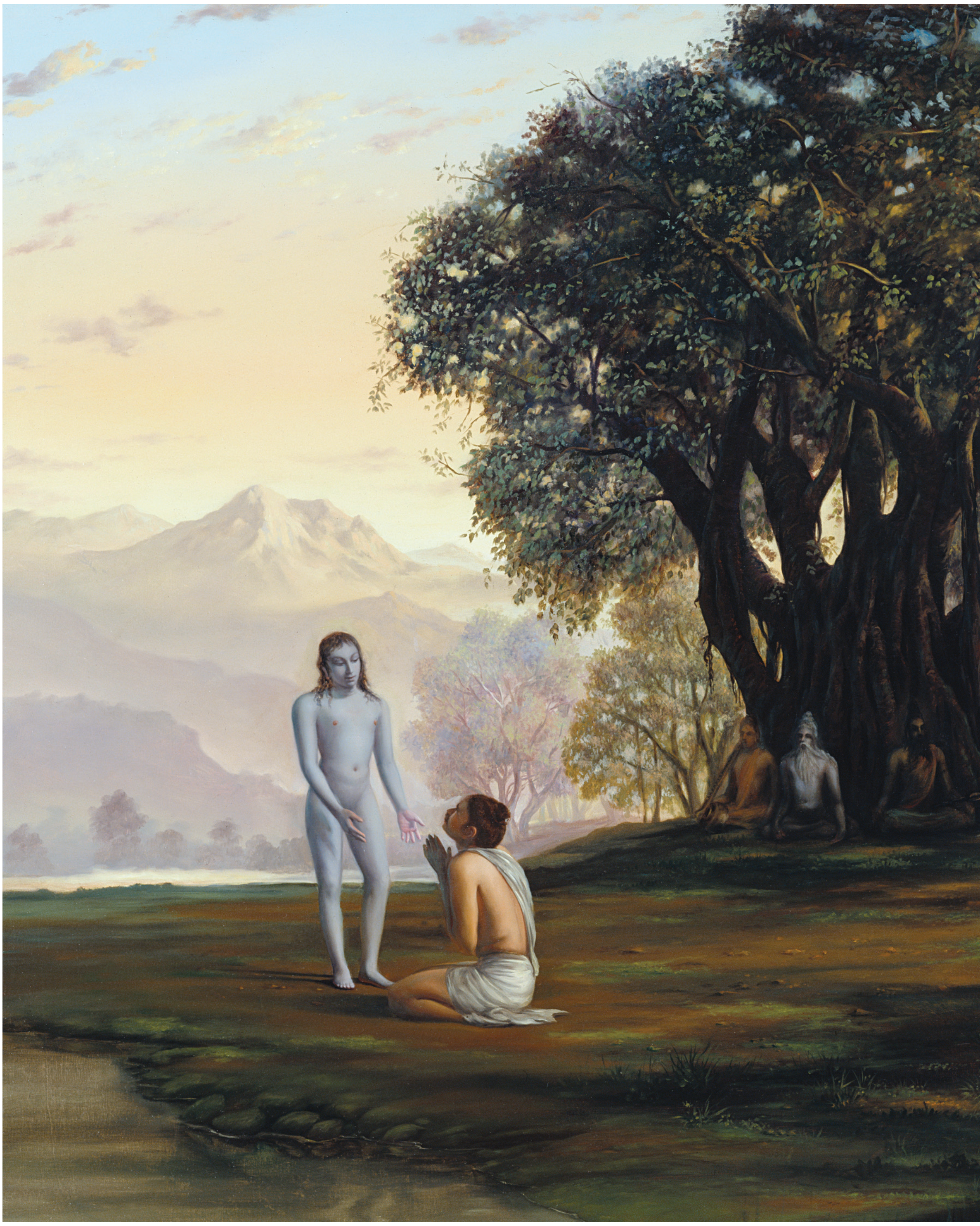
Adapted from a talk given at Sukatal on October 2, 2006.

Sukatal (below) sits on the bank of the Ganges between Muzaffarnagar and Bijnor, about sixty miles northeast of Delhi. Inset: deities of Śukadeva Gosvāmī and Mahārāja Parīkṣit at the site where Śukadeva spoke the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.

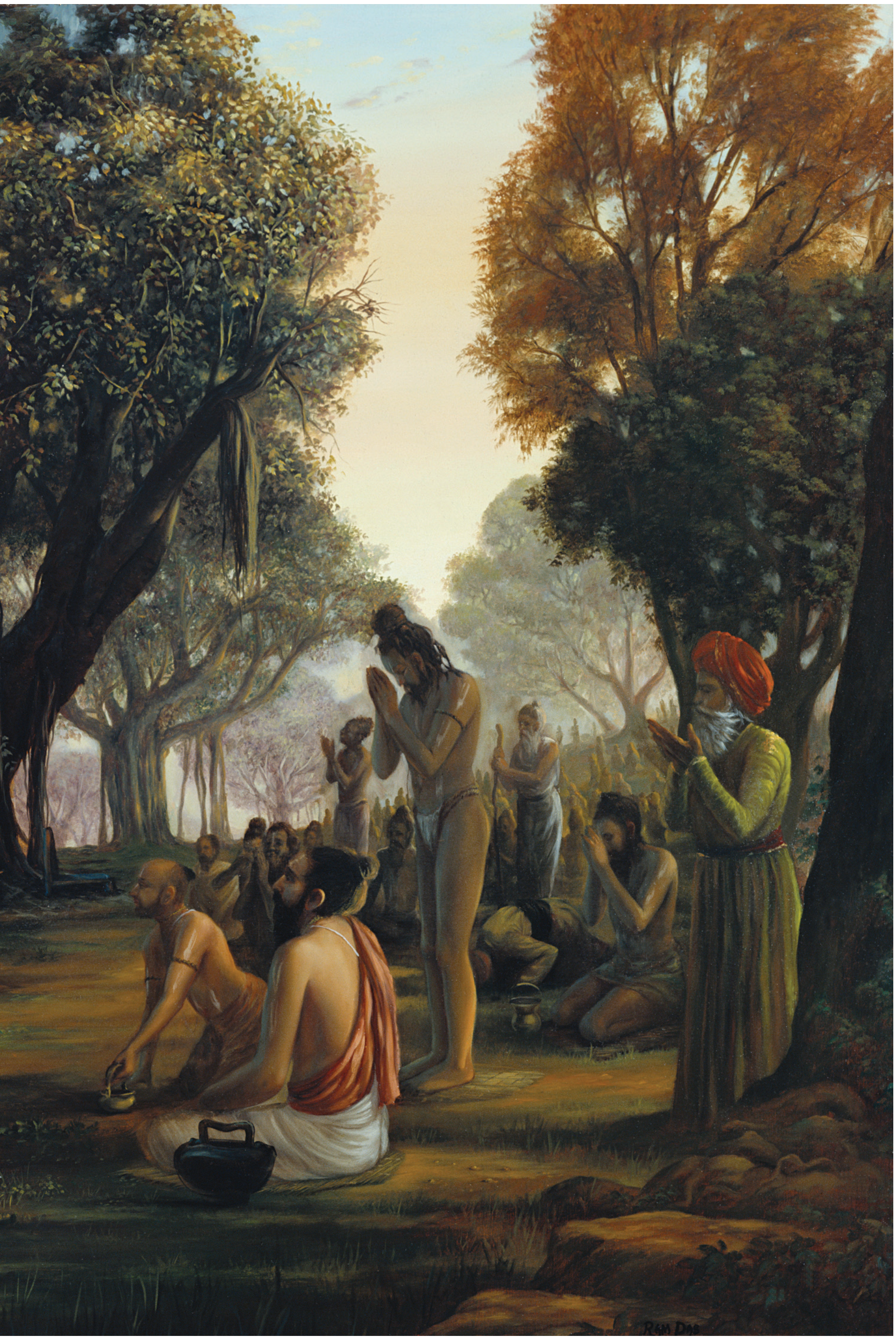
Cursed to die in seven days, King Parīkṣit welcomes Śukadeva Gosvāmī, born a liberated soul. The king and the assembled sages all recognize Śukadeva as the best person to reply to the king's questions about his primary duty as he faces death.



death. On hearing this news, many great sages traveled here from all over the universe. Mahārāja Parīkṣit asked the sages, "What is the purpose of life, the unalloyed duty of everyone in all circumstances, and especially at the end of one's life?" Some sages recommended that Mahārāja Parīkṣit perform sacrifices, practice yoga, and give in charity. But he showed himself to be more spiritually advanced than these sages when he revealed his desire: "I pray that if I should again take my birth in the material world I will have complete attachment to the unlimited Lord Kṛṣṇa, association with His devotees, and friendly relations with all living beings."

The Recognized Leader of the Sages

Then the sixteen-year-old Śukadeva Gosvāmī appeared on the scene. The powerful son of Vyāsadeva, he traveled the world disinterested and satisfied within himself. He showed no signs of belonging to any social order or status of life. He was



Painting by Rāmadāsa Abhirāma Dāsa

naked (*digambaram:* "clothed by the four directions"). He was handsome, with a bodily hue like that of Lord Kṛṣṇa. By seeing his bodily features, the great sages present recognized him as a great personality. They greeted him by rising from their seats.

Mahārāja Parīkṣit bowed his head to receive the chief guest, Śukadeva Gosvāmī. Saintly sages and demigods surrounded Parīkṣit Mahārāja, just as stars and other heavenly planets surround the moon. He recognized Śukadeva's arrival as Kṛṣṇa's arrangement, so he asked Śukadeva the same questions he had asked the sages.

Śukadeva replied by speaking on the ten subjects of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam:* the creation of the universe, subcreation, planetary systems, protection by the Lord, the creative impetus, the change of Manus, the science of God, returning home, back to Godhead, liberation, and the greatest good, or *āśraya. Āśraya* means shelter. The ultimate subject of the *Bhāgavatam* is *kṛṣṇa-prema,* love of Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa is *viśaya-vigraha,* or the subject, making Him the object of *prema.* The *aśraya-vigraha* is Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, the shelter of *prema*—and therefore the subject of the *Bhāgavatam.*

In *Gopāla Campū* Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī writes that in Goloka Vṛndāvana, the abode of Kṛṣṇa in the spiritual world, Śukadeva Gosvāmī's original form is that of one of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī's pet parrots. Śukadeva came to Sukatal to speak the *Bhāgavatam,* which describes Kṛṣṇa, but he didn't describe Rādhā. One reason for that is that he is Rādhārāṇī's parrot and She likes to hear about Kṛṣṇa. Another reason is that to please Rādhā, Śukadeva wanted to engage souls (*jīvas*) on earth in hearing about Kṛṣṇa. All *jīvas* are eternal servants of Kṛṣṇa. A *jīva* who attains the highest position of serving Kṛṣṇa comes under the shelter of Rādhā, because She knows how to serve Kṛṣṇa best. Her very name means "the best servant of the Lord." Because She serves Kṛṣṇa best, we can serve Kṛṣṇa best by assisting Her in Her service to Him.

The arrival of Śukadeva Gosvāmī into the presence of Parīkṣit Mahārāja is one of the greatest moments in the history of the universe, because devotees and philosophers came together to discuss Kṛṣṇa. Nowadays "history" means mundane activities of the past, but the real history is given in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam,* also known as the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. Therefore, an article describing Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura's visit to Sukatal (on December 23, 1930) was titled *Paramarathik Bhugol o Itihas*—"Spiritual Geography and History."

The Oldest Veda

Sukatal is always worth remembering and offering respects to because here Śukadeva Gosvāmī spoke the *Bhāgavatam* to Parīkṣit Mahārāja. Although the *Bhāgavatam* is listed as a *Purāṇa,* it is the essence of all the *Vedas.* Some people believe that the four *Vedas—Ṛg, Sāma, Yajur,* and *Atharvā*—are the oldest parts of the Vedic literature. But at the beginning of creation Lord Kṛṣṇa spoke the *catur-ślokī* ("four-verse") *Bhāgavatam* to Brahmā, which makes *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* the oldest. Since then it has been spoken throughout history in various forms. In its present form the *Bhāgavatam* brings together various histories that show the supremacy of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Śrīla Vyāsadeva, after compiling and revising *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam,* taught it to his son, Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī, although his son was already self-realized. Vyāsadeva knew that the Lord's transcendental qualities can attract everyone, even persons free from material bondage. Such liberated persons develop the desire to render unalloyed devotional service, *bhakti,* unto the Personality of Godhead. This proves that *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam,* whose subjects are Kṛṣṇa and *bhakti,* is transcendental, beyond the modes of material nature.

Śukadeva Gosvāmī started by praising the questions posed by Parīkṣit Mahārāja—and not by discussing Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's intimate *rāsa-līlā*—because the answers to Parīkṣit's questions point out the prime subject for hearing as approved by all transcendentalists. Such knowledge is of no interest to a materially engrossed person who spends his valuable lifetime only in sleeping, sex, making money, and maintaining his family. Śukadeva's instruction that one must hear about, glorify, and remember the Personality of Godhead, irrespective of one's path, is meant only for persons who desire freedom from all miseries. These instructions constitute our topmost duty.

Surprisingly, many assembled sages couldn't answer Parīkṣit's questions correctly and required Śukadeva Gosvāmī to do so. Why? Because just being a transcendentalist is insufficient. Śukadeva Gosvāmī himself exemplified this point. Vyāsadeva knew that in the *Bhāgavatam's* teachings he had something to give that his self-realized son could appreciate. So when Śukadeva left home, Vyāsadeva had his disciples chant the *Bhāgavatam* on the path where Śukadeva was walking. When Śukadeva heard the *Bhāgavatam*, he felt an attraction to it. Because he wasn't attracted to anything material, he could understand that this must be a spiritual attraction.

Pilgrims to Sukatal can't miss the enormous statue of Hanumān (above) towering above a temple in town.

The Ganges (below) flows gently past Sukatal, allowing a cowherd to lead his herd across the river (bottom).

The Spotless Purāṇa

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam is glorified as the spotless *Purāṇa* because it does not promote *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma*, and *mokṣa*: materially tinged religion, economic development, sense gratification, and liberation devoid of *bhakti*. These are generally considered desirable subjects for civilized persons. But the *Bhāgavatam* tells us that any scripture or literature that does not clearly identify Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Personality of Godhead is rubbish, "a place of pilgrimage for crows." Because *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* leads one to Kṛṣṇa—the highest conclusion of all Vedic literature—it is dear to Vaiṣṇavas, who are seekers of the essence of things (*sāra-bhṛtham*). *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* gives knowledge relished by the *paramahaṁsas*, or transcendentalists. Its teachings are the perfection of renunciation, austerity, and detachment. Hence one should hear *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* from a representative of Śukadeva Gosvāmī. One should study it carefully and be blessed to go home, back to Godhead.

Lord Caitanya Reveals The Bhāgavatam's Essence

As I mentioned earlier, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura's visit to Sukatal is described in the article *Spiritual Geography and History*. The author, Śrī Sundarānanda Vidyāvinoda, quotes him as saying that although a great *ācārya* can transmit the teachings of Śukadeva Gosvāmī, Caitanya Mahāprabhu revealed the real essence of the *Bhāgavatam*—*ujjvala-rasa,* "splendid *rasa,*" or Kṛṣṇa's intimate relationships with His devotees. The *Bhāgavatam* gives the highest philosophical exposition of the Absolute Truth, beginning with the four seed verses,

ISKCON pilgrims offer respects to the tree (above) that signifies the spot where Śukadeva Gosvāmī spoke. At left, they receive sacred water (caraṇāmṛta) *from the small temple of Śukadeva and Parīkṣit next to the tree.*

and goes up to the *gopī's* appreciating Kṛṣṇa decorated with a peacock feather in His hair and looking like a stage actor, going out with the cowherd boys to the pastures, filling up the holes of His flute with transcendental sound, and so on.

Caitanya Mahāprabhu gave the ultimate essence of the *Bhāgavatam:* the glories of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. To readers of the *Bhāgavatam* who don't fully know the book, Rādhā is invisible there. Queen Kuntī says that Kṛṣṇa is invisible to the foolish and unintelligent. Caitanya Mahāprabhu came to give *rādhā-mahimā*, the glories of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, the sweetness of the sweet girls of Vṛndāvana, and entrance into their Vraja. That is Caitanya Mahāprabhu's *viraha-bhāva,* or mood of service in separation. His close associates Rūpa Gosvāmī and Svarūpa Dāmodara Gosvāmī understood His mood, and Rūpa Gosvāmī revealed it to others. We are known as Rūpānuga Vaiṣṇavas, followers of Rūpa Gosvāmī. He revealed that Caitanya Mahāprabhu is Kṛṣṇa with *rādhā-bhāva,* the mood of Rādhā: He is Kṛṣṇa hankering after Kṛṣṇa.

A Suitable Place for Kīrtana

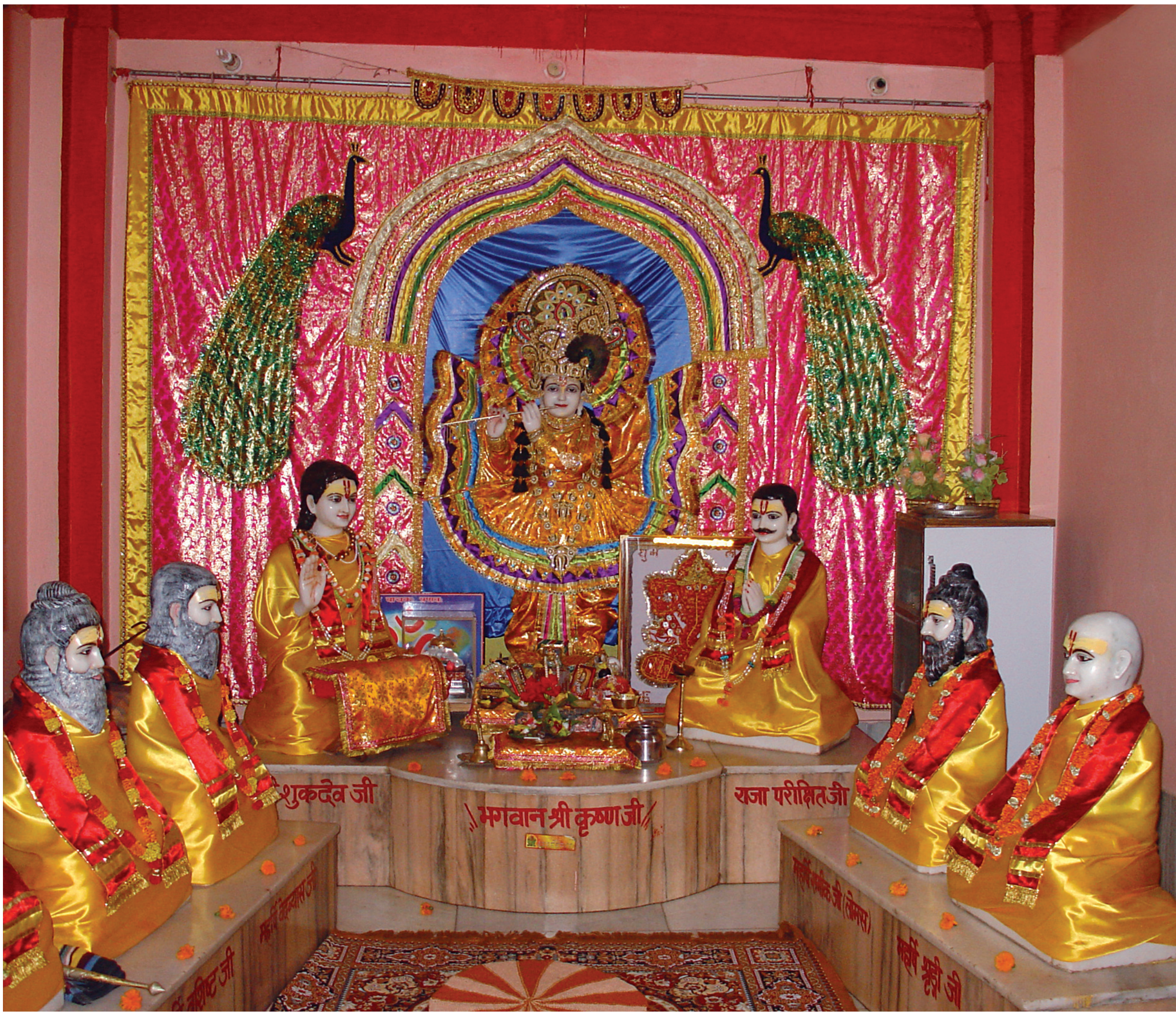
The name *Sukatal* refers to a raised area where Śukadeva Gosvāmī spoke the *Bhāgavatam. Tal* means hill. A banyan tree marks the spot. A large festival takes place here during the month of Kārttika. When Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta

Sarasvatī Ṭhākura came here, there was hardly anything here because of repeated flooding of the Ganges. People had left the area. Sundarānanda Vidyāvinoda wrote in his article that Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura came here because Sukatal lacked a proper speaker like Śukadeva. He also wanted to research the appearance of Sukatal and perform *kīrtana* as recommended by Śukadeva Gosvāmī in the last verse of *Bhāgavatam.*

Bhakti Vikāśa Swami, originally from England, is an ISKCON sannyāsī, *guru, and author. He spends most of his time in India, teaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness.*

श्री शुकदेव जी
श्री चरणदास जी
श्री शुकदेव जी महाराज द्वारा
श्री श्यामचरण दास जी को
डहरे ग्राम में पाँच वर्ष की अवस्था में
दर्शन देकर दो पेडे प्रदान करना
श्री शुकदेव जी महाराज द्वारा
श्री श्यामचरण दास जी को
वंशीवट पर परिकर सहित
श्री राधाकृष्ण के दर्शन कराना
नमो शुकदेव हों चरण पर वारणम्।
द्वन्द संकट हरण करण सुरव मंगलं, परम आनन्दघन पतित के तारणम् ॥
नाम तक त्याग वैराग है मुक्ति लौं, तीन हूँ गुणन ते निर्विकारम् ॥
महा निष्काम और धाम चौथे रहो, सिद्धि चेरी भई फिरैं लारम् ॥१॥
ज्ञान के रूप अरू भूप सब मुनिन में, दया की नाव किये जीव पारम् ॥
उदय भागवत मत भानु परगट कियो तिमिर कियो दूर अरु धर्म धारम ॥२॥

The author leads a kīrtana *before speaking on the* Bhāgavatam *(above). Pilgrims (above, right) view the main altar (right), with its deities of Kṛṣṇa, Śukadeva, Parīkṣit, and saints connected with the temple. At left: King Parīkṣit (left) and Śrī Caraṇa Dāsa, a prominent devotee who served at the site.*



The Macmill

The surprising events surrounding the initial publication of Śrīla Prabhupāda's Bhagavad-gītā As It Is.

by Satyarāja Dāsa

THE *Bhagavad-gītā* was important to Śrīla Prabhupāda. He saw it as the perfect book to convey Kṛṣṇa consciousness, as it consists of the Lord's own words and His interactions with His loving devotee. In 1939, just seven years after Prabhupāda was initiated by his spiritual master, he wrote a lengthy introduction to the book in English, presaging his full translation and commentary, which appeared soon after he began his mission in the West.

When Prabhupāda arrived in New York in 1965, he gave priority to his work on the *Gītā.* In India he had already completed a translation, spanning well over a thousand pages, but it was stolen. In March 1966, Prabhupāda was adjusting to life in the Western world when he met with another loss: his typewriter, cassette recorder, and several books were taken from him. But he was resilient and determined to complete his work. In 1967 he finished the new manuscript, again over a thousand pages, and resolved to get a major publisher so that his message would be heard throughout the world.

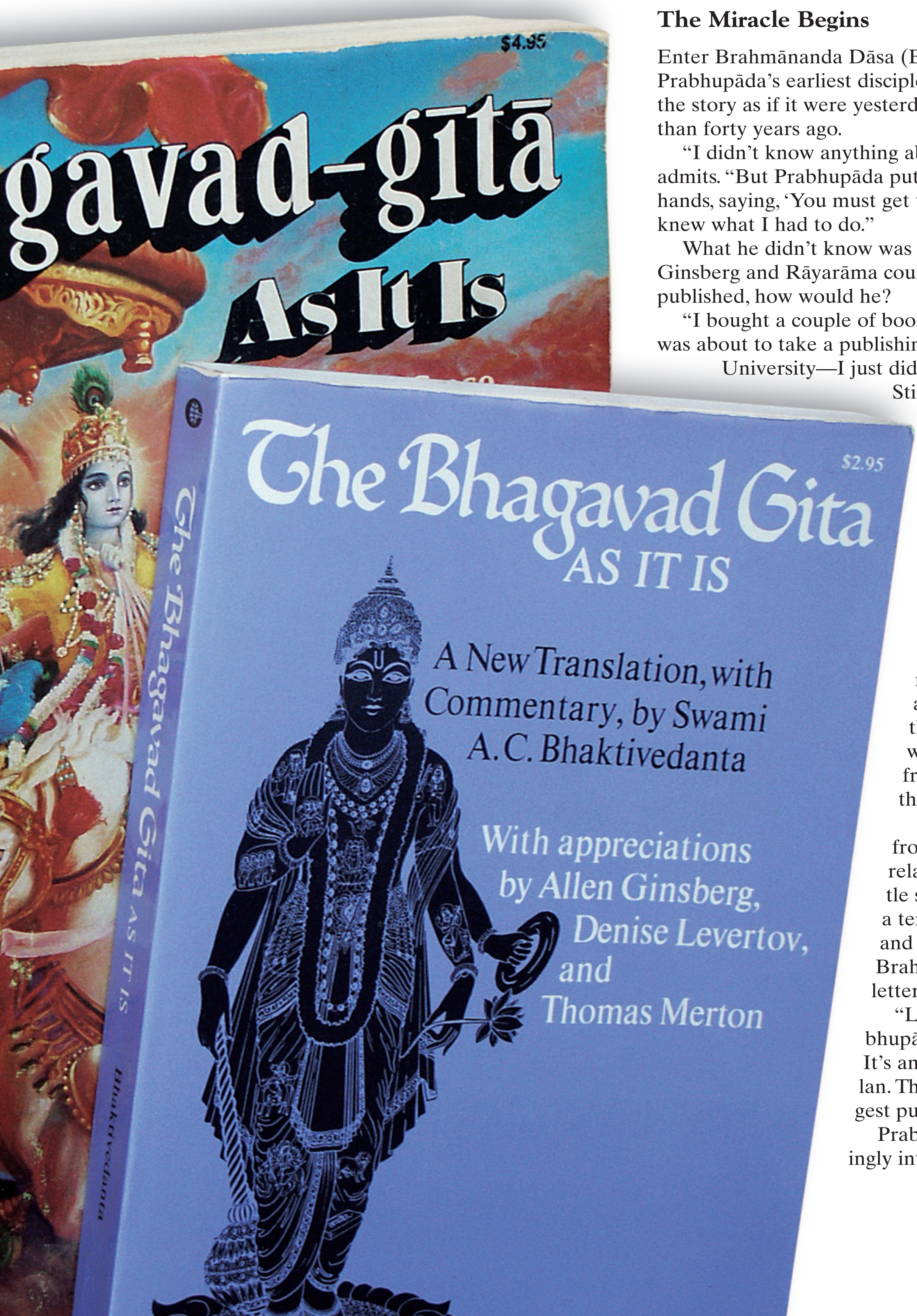
At the time, Allen Ginsberg, famous poet of the Beat Generation, was visiting the New York temple, and he was enjoying a friendly relationship with Śrīla Prabhupāda. Since Ginsberg was an experienced, published author, Prabhupāda asked him to show the manuscript to his benefactors, which Ginsberg did. But they were unimpressed, claiming the book had little commercial value.

Prabhupāda then gave the manuscript to Rāyarāma Dāsa, an early disciple with some experience in the publishing world. Rāyārama, too, was unsuccessful in his attempts, his contacts explaining their hesitation in much the same way that Ginsberg's did.

Bha
A.C. Bhaktivedanta
Swami Prabhupāda
Bhagavad-gītā
As It Is

Macmillan Publishing first printed Śrīla Prabhupāda's Bhagavad-gītā As It Is *in an abridged edition (blue cover, 1968). The full edition appeared in 1972. Macmillan senior editor James Wade (below) accepted the manuscript for publication.*

an Miracle


$4.95
gavad-gītā
As It Is
The Bhagavad Gita
AS IT IS
$2.95
A New Translation, with Commentary, by Swami A.C. Bhaktivedanta
With appreciations by Allen Ginsberg, Denise Levertov, and Thomas Merton
The Bhagavad Gita AS IT IS
Bhaktivedanta

The Miracle Begins

Enter Brahmānanda Dāsa (Bruce Scharf), one of Prabhupāda's earliest disciples. He vividly relates the story as if it were yesterday, though it was more than forty years ago.

"I didn't know anything about publishing," he admits. "But Prabhupāda put the manuscript in my hands, saying, 'You must get this published.' So I knew what I had to do."

What he didn't know was how to do it. If Ginsberg and Rāyarāma couldn't get the book published, how would he?

"I bought a couple of books on publishing, and I was about to take a publishing course at New York University—I just didn't know what to do. Still, Prabhupāda wanted me to get the book published, and that was that."

Around this time, the devotees had released the "Happening" album, an assortment of devotional songs sung by Prabhupāda with musical accompaniment. They had placed an ad for the record in the *Village Voice* and were receiving orders from various parts of the East Coast.

One such order came from uptown Manhattan, relatively close to the little storefront serving as a temple for Prabhupāda and his early disciples. Brahmānanda brought the letter to his master.

"Look, Swamiji [as Prabhupāda was then called]. It's an order from Macmillan. They're one of the biggest publishers in the world."

Prabhupāda gazed knowingly into his disciple's eyes

Scholars Praise Bhagavad-gītā As It Is

Critical acclaim came quickly after publication, with scholars and literati of the day praising Śrīla Prabhupāda's work.

It is a deeply felt, powerfully conceived and beautifully explained work. I don't know whether to praise more this translation of the *Bhagavad-gītā,* its daring method of explanation, or the endless fertility of its ideas. I have never seen any other work on the *Gītā* with such an important voice and style. . . . It will occupy a significant place in the intellectual and ethical life of modern man for a long time to come.

Dr. Shaligram Shukla
Professor of Linguistics
Georgetown University

There is little question that this edition is one of the best books available on the *Gītā* and devotion. Prabhupāda's translation is an ideal blend of literal accuracy and religious insight.

Dr. Thomas J. Hopkins
Professor of Religion
Franklin and Marshall College

No work in all Indian literature is more quoted, because none is better loved, in the West, than the *Bhagavad-gītā.* Translation of such a work demands not only knowledge of Sanskrit, but an inward sympathy with the theme and a verbal artistry. For the poem is a symphony in which God is seen in all things. . . . The Swami does a real service for students by investing the beloved Indian epic with fresh meaning. Whatever our outlook may be, we should all be grateful for the labor that has led to this illuminating work.

Dr. Geddes MacGregor
Emeritus Distinguished
Professor of Philosophy
University of Southern California

I can say that in the *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* I have found explanations and answers to questions I had always posed regarding the interpretations of this sacred work, whose spiritual discipline I greatly admire. If the asceticism and ideal of the apostles which form the message of the *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* were more widespread and more respected, the world in which we live would be transformed into a better, more fraternal place.

Dr. Paul Lesourd
Author, Professeur Honoraire
Catholic University of Paris

The scholarly world is again indebted to A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda. Although *Bhagavad-gītā* has been translated many times, Prabhupāda adds a translation of singular importance with his commentary.

Dr. J. Stillson Judah
Professor of the History of Religions
and Director of Libraries
Graduate Theological Union
Berkeley, California

The *Bhagavad-gītā,* one of the great spiritual texts, is not as yet a common part of our cultural milieu. This is probably less because it is alien per se than because we have lacked just the kind of close interpretative commentary upon it that Swami Bhaktivedanta has here provided, a commentary written from not only a scholar's but a practitioner's, a dedicated lifelong devotee's, point of view.

Denise Levertov
Poet

The increasing numbers of Western readers interested in classical Vedic thought have been done a service by Swami Bhaktivedanta. By bringing us a new and living interpretation of a text already known to many, he has increased our understanding manyfold.

Dr. Edward C. Dimock, Jr.
Department of South Asian
Languages and Civilization
University of Chicago

and gave the following directives: "Do not mail out this order as we do with others. Instead, bring the record to Macmillan's offices and hand deliver it to the person who sent us the letter."

Brahmānanda nodded, aware that Kṛṣṇa was using him as an instrument.

"When you deliver the album," Prabhupāda continued, "tell them that you are a disciple of a guru from India and that he has translated the *Bhagavad-gītā.* They will publish it. Do not worry."

Brahmānanda was stunned. Prabhupāda seemed so confident. There was no doubt the book would get published—and by Macmillan! One couldn't do much better than that.

Wading in the Ocean of Nectar

The next day, dressed in suit and tie, Brahmānanda made his way up to the Macmillan skyscraper at 866 Third Avenue, just off 52nd Street. His expectations as large as the building itself, he was disappointed when he learned that the order for the album had come from a clerk in the mailroom.

"This really had nothing to do with the publishing company—it was just a simple worker who had some interest in mantras and meditation."

So Brahmānanda dutifully delivered the album and had pretty much given up hope that his teacher's *Gītā* would get published. Just then, in the midst of polite small talk with the clerk, a young

I am most impressed with A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada's scholarly and authoritative edition of *Bhagavad-gītā*. It is a most valuable work for the scholar as well as the layman and is of great utility as a reference book as well as a textbook. I promptly recommend this edition to my students. It is a beautifully done book.

Dr. Samuel D. Atkins
Professor of Sanskrit
Princeton University

Whether the reader be an adept of Indian spiritualism or not, a reading of the *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* will be extremely profitable. For many this will be the first contact with the true India, the ancient India, the eternal India.

Francois Chenique
Professor of Religious Sciences
Institute of Political Studies
Paris, France

I am very excited to see the publication of *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* by Śrī A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda. It will help to stop the terrible cheating of false and unauthorized "gurus" and "yogis" and will give an opportunity to all people to understand the actual meaning of Oriental culture.

Dr. Kailash Vajpeye
Director of Indian Studies
Center for Oriental Studies
The University of Mexico

executive happened to appear, hoping to collect his mail. The clerk introduced him to Brahmānanda.

"This is James O'Shea Wade, our senior editor."

Brahmānanda seized the moment.

"I am a disciple of a guru from India," he said, trying to repeat Prabhupāda's words verbatim. "He has translated the *Bhagavad-gītā*."

"What?" Wade responded, incredulously. "We've just published a full line of spiritual books, and we were looking for a *Bhagavad-gītā* to fill out the set."

Brahmānanda's mouth dropped open. Though at a loss for words himself, he contemplated the potency of Prabhupāda's: "They will publish it. Do not worry."

Wade then broke the awkward silence.

"You bring in the manuscript tomorrow," he offered, "and we'll publish it, sight unseen."

Brahmānanda raced back down to the storefront and told Prabhupāda the news. In his own inimitable way, Prabhupāda was nonchalant, as though he knew what would transpire before it happened.

> ***"I vividly remember the stir caused in our rather sedate and boring office the day the Swami came to visit."***

Firsthand Corroboration

Now, are these the memories of an over-zealous disciple, an exaggerated footnote in ISKCON's forty-year history? I decided to find out.

I found James Wade, and he confirmed the events in question. He remembered the incident with tremendous clarity, supporting Brahmānanda's story. And he offered an addendum.

"I vividly remember the stir caused in our rather sedate and boring office the day the Swami came to visit, accompanied by followers in orange robes."

Apparently, Prabhupāda himself brought the manuscript the day after Brahmānanda's brief visit to Macmillan.

Wade shared his thoughts about Prabhupāda's spirituality.

"I remember the Swami as being a very imposing and striking figure, with a powerful spiritual aura. His like had never before been seen in the Macmillan offices. Around that time we also published Alan Watts and John Bleibtreu, who was involved in the spiritual and communal movement called Arica. Macmillan had a tradition of publishing books about spirituality and religion at that time. I think that ended not long after I left to become the editor-in-chief of the now defunct World Publishing Company. But the Swami was special. That was clear."

I asked Wade to elaborate on that fateful meeting.

"Our office was a rather austere, coolly modern place as far as decor. I remember having some apprehension about how comfortable the Swami would feel in this rather alien setting, but it turned out that he was a man who was at peace and at home in any environment. I remember him as a rather tall man, physically imposing. But of course, he wasn't, being rather small in stature and not at all daunting. Quiet, modest, and surrounded by a kind of stillness, a peacefulness that was, well, welcoming. I can't think of a more precise word. He was in the world and, at the same time, not of it. He knew that we live in a world of illusion—something science has also taught us, as we go from sub-atomic particles and quantum mechanics to string theory. I remember that he wanted the *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* to get the widest possible exposure in the US. As I recall, things like the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement were in the very early stages. Alternative spirituality—ranging from Zen to Tibetan Buddhism, for example—had not then touched the minds and spirits of people the way such alternatives do today for so many."

James Wade was senior editor at Macmillan from 1965 to 1969. But in his few years at their offices, he

Other Stories About The Macmillan Gītā

TO FIT INTO the Macmillan series of spiritual classics, Prabhupāda's *Gītā* had to conform to a certain size and style, which meant that it had to be cut down from its thousand-page manuscript to just over three hundred pages. What to do? Would Prabhupāda want this?

Brahmānanda was surprised when his spiritual master said, "Do whatever the publisher wants. But our men must do the editing so the meaning is not changed."

Hayagrīva and Rāyarāma, two of Prabhupāda's more literary disciples, did the editing and gave Macmillan the abridged *Gītā* ahead of the deadline. But Prabhupāda made it clear that he would eventually publish his full, unabridged version.

Brahmānanda wrote to famous literati, poets, and religious scholars, hoping they would contribute forewords to Prabhupāda's work and thus help secure sales. He approached Thomas Merton, Allen Ginsberg, Denise Levertov, and Allan Watts. All but Watts agreed. In his reply to Brahmānanda, Watts wrote that Prabhupāda's philosophy of presenting the *Gītā* "as it is," without interpretation, was itself an interpretation and thus intellectually dishonest.

Brahmānanda was worried, not because he doubted Prabhupāda but because Watts was a popular author who published with Macmillan. Would James Wade reverse his decision to publish Prabhupāda's book when he saw the response of one of his own authors?

Not at all. Wade said that while Watts wrote good books, he didn't understand the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition of the Swami. Prabhupāda's book was in, no matter what.

Prabhupāda engaged Govinda Dāsī in Hawaii to illustrate the cover of his first Macmillan edition. They discussed the antiwar demonstrations at the time and decided not to put the *Bhagavad-gītā's* usual battlefield scene on the cover. Instead, Prabhupāda told Govinda Dāsī to depict the Universal Form, with His many heads, tongues, arms, and so on. The "psychedelic" nature of it, they agreed, would appeal to the hippies.

Once the illustration was submitted to the publisher, however, Macmillan had reservations. Considering it too otherworldly for their usual audience, they opted to discard the many arms and heads, leaving only four arms and one head. Govinda Dāsī was upset that they had changed her work.

"Think nothing of it," Prabhupāda said. "It is now Viṣṇu, which is more advanced than the Universal Form."

Prabhupāda had always wanted his name to appear at the bottom of his books, underneath the painting of Kṛṣṇa or of one of His incarnations that might be used on the cover. He never wanted his name at the side of the Lord, in equal position, for that would be improper etiquette.

When the Macmillan book came back with Prabhupāda's name right next to the image of the Lord, Prabhupāda looked at it long and hard, and then he said, "It's all right. The energy of the Lord is always at His left side, and the devotee is an expansion of that energy. So it is all right."

made history by publishing a pure devotee's edition of the *Bhagavad-gītā.* The abridged version came out first, in 1968, and because of seeds James Wade planted, Macmillan published Prabhupāda's unabridged *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* in 1972.

A Translation With Spiritual Power

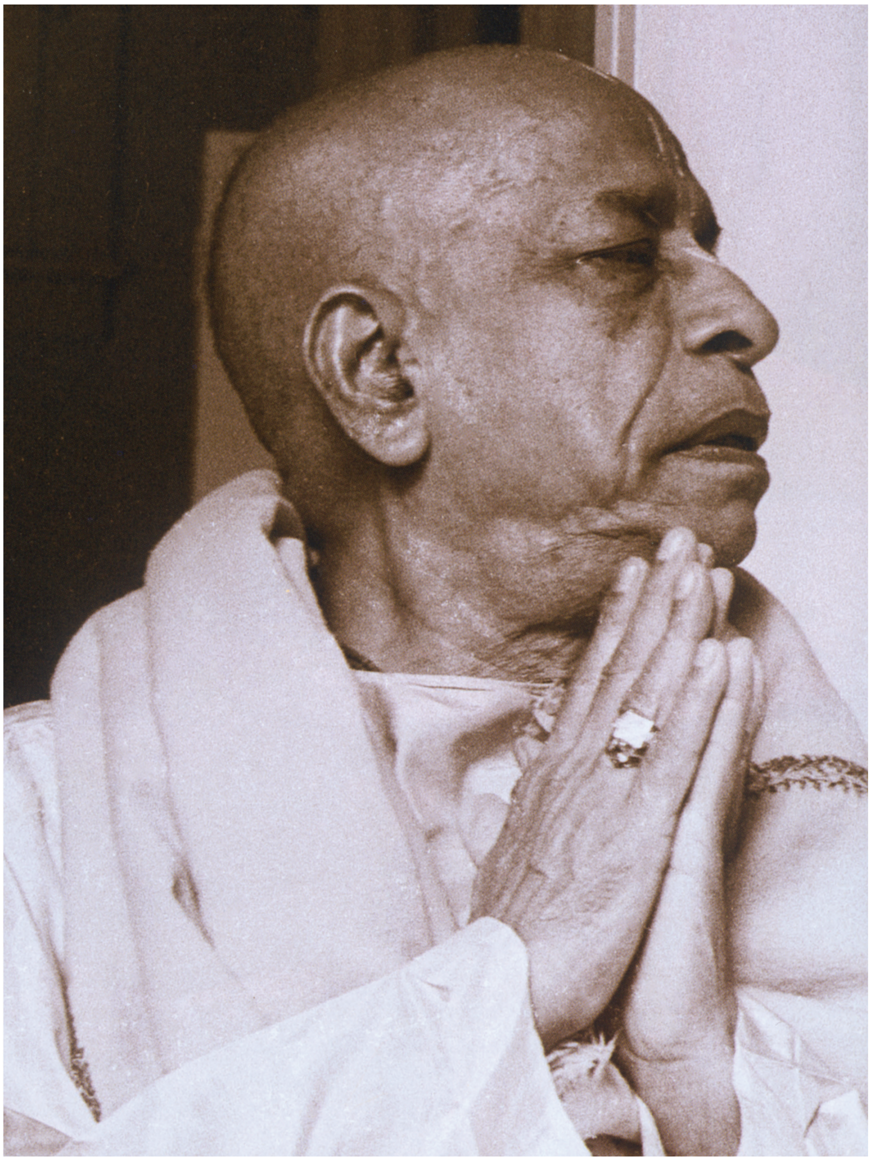
Śrīla Prabhupāda's translation and commentary are not merely his own; they bring to bear the insights of his predecessors in disciplic succession. And so he titled his edition "As It Is." The name boldly announces to his readers that this is not yet another interpretation but rather the original message of the book's initial speaker: Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Accordingly, Prabhupāda's *Gītā* was the first English edition to bring people to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, to make them devotees of Kṛṣṇa, which is the book's intended purpose (see Bg. 18.65).

Prabhupāda's *Gītā* went on to become the most important edition in the modern world, often outselling both popular and scholarly translations. Claiming millions of readers in some fifty-five languages, from Polish to Japanese, German to Azerbaijani, Danish to Croatian, English to numerous Indian languages, Śrīla Prabhupāda's *Gītā* is a phenomenon. It can be found in homes, bookstores, research libraries, and academic institutions around the world.

The history of Prabhupāda's meeting with Macmillan shows that James Wade, then a senior editor, served as an instrument in the hands of Kṛṣṇa, who had already signed the contract.

Satyarāja Dāsa, a disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda, is a BTG associate editor. He has written over twenty books on Kṛṣṇa consciousness and lives near New York City.

"We Are Hare Kṛṣṇa People"



This exchange between His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda and reporters took place at New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport on March 5, 1975.

Reporter: Swamiji, what special message would you have for people who don't know anything about your movement and would like to know something about it?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: It is a little difficult to understand this movement, because it is a spiritual movement. Unfortunately, people have practically no information about what spirit is and what a spiritual movement is. They can simply understand that the body is there—but the body is a machine, and the driver of the machine is the spirit soul. So we are beginning our movement from this platform. People are very much engrossed with the machine only, but they have no information about who is driving the machine. That is what we are teaching.

Reporter: Swamiji, your movement has received much attention because many of your followers dress in what, for the West, is an odd fashion. Why have you asked your followers to dress in this fashion and play drums on the streets?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: This is our preaching method—somehow or other to draw people's attention, so that they may have the opportunity to revive their eternal relationship with God.

Reporter: I'm sure that you're aware that to many people in the West, your disciples seem strange because of the way they act on the streets. What about that?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes, they must seem strange, because they are acting spiritually. To materialistic persons we are surely acting strangely.

Reporter: Is this manifestation the only way to be spiritual?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: No, there is much more. For instance, we don't have any illicit sex; we don't have meat-eating; we have no intoxication; we have no gambling.

Reporter: But I mean, Swamiji, is this manifestation—dressing in this fashion, playing drums, and dancing in the streets—the only way to be spiritual?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: No. We have published about seventy books. If you want to learn about this movement through science and philosophy, you have got our books. Have you not seen our books?

Reporter: Yes, I have, but—can't people be spiritual without dressing in this fashion and dancing in the streets?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. You can become spiritualized in the clothing you are wearing now. You simply have to learn about spiritual life from the books. Dress is not a very important thing. Still, in the material world one person is dressed in one way; another, another way.

Reporter: The way we ordinary people dress lets us move in all circles. But the way your disciples dress . . .

Śrīla Prabhupāda: The thing is, to signify that one is performing a particular job, he may dress differently. For example, a policeman is differently dressed, so that others can understand that he is a policeman. Similarly, we are also differently dressed, so that everyone may understand that we are Hare Kṛṣṇa people.

Second Reporter: Swami, I saw a television program about your movement once, and they said that the men give the directions and the women follow. Is that true?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Not necessarily. We follow the *Bhagavad-gītā,* the directions of Lord Kṛṣṇa. That is applicable to both men and women.

Second Reporter: Are men regarded as superior to women, though?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes, naturally. Naturally a woman requires protection by a man—in childhood she is protected by her father, later she is protected by her husband, and in old age she is protected by her eldest sons. That is natural.

Second Reporter: That goes against the thinking of a lot of people in America now. Do you know that?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: In America, maybe. But this is the natural situation. Women require protection.

Third Reporter: Swamiji, is there a chance that all your followers can realize the highest truth?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: They already have.

Third Reporter: They already have?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Certainly, and I can deliver it to you, also, if you want. The highest truth is that God is a person, like you and me. Now, what is the difference between this one person and all the rest of us? It is this: He maintains all of us, and we are maintained by Him. But He is also a person, like you and me. Do you follow?

Third Reporter: Yes, I do.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: So my disciples have already realized the highest truth. Otherwise, why would they be following a teacher like me? I am a poor Indian man. Why are they following me? They are American—they are rich. So how could I have bribed them? These young people are educated, qualified. Why are they following me, unless they have already realized some higher knowledge?

Fourth Reporter: Swamiji, I have one more question for you, please. It seems to me, and I think to other sympathetic observers, that you have asked your spiritual children to go deep within the heart of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement to accomplish what you've set as their goal. But as far as I know, they do not work in, for instance, hospitals or perform service to the "outer world" other than offering free meals at the temple and preaching the word of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Many of my disciples work at ordinary professions, of course. But do you know what real service is?

Fourth Reporter: The answer should come from you and not from me.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Suppose you open a hospital. You can cure some disease for the time being, but can you give a patient any assurance that he will not die? Can you protect him from death? In spite of all your big hospitals, can you protect humanity from death, from birth, from old age, from disease? Can you?

Fourth Reporter: Physically, of course not. Only spiritually.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: So we are providing that—the process whereby one can return to the kingdom of God, where there is no more death, no more birth, no more old age, and no more disease.

What Is the Hare Kṛṣṇa Movement?

Founded in 1966 by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) carries on a great ancient tradition rooted in the *Bhagavad-gītā,* the teachings Lord Kṛṣṇa spoke five millennia ago. The *Gītā* and the other Vedic scriptures declare Kṛṣṇa to be the original person, God Himself, who appears periodically in this world to liberate all living beings.

Only five hundred years ago, Kṛṣṇa descended as Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu to teach the most sublime and effective means of meditation for the present day: the chanting of the names of God, especially as found in the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra.

Today members of ISKCON continue Lord Caitanya's movement by distributing the teachings of Lord Kṛṣṇa and the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra all over the world.

Pronunciation

We spell Sanskrit words and names by a phonetic system that lets you know how to say each word. Pronounce short **a** like the **u** in b**u**t, long **ā** like the **a** in f**a**r (and held twice as long as the short **a**). Pronounce **e** like the **a** in ev**a**de, long **ī** like the **i** in p**i**que. Pronounce the vowel **ṛ** like the **ri** in **ri**m, and **c** like the **ch** in **ch**air. Pronounce consonants like **ch, jh,** and **dh** as in staun**ch-h**eart, hed**ge-h**og, and re**d-h**ot. Pronounce **ś** and **ṣ** like **sh.** So for *Kṛṣna* say KRISHNA, for *Caitanya* say CHAITANYA.

Spiritual Names

ISKCON members receive names of Lord Kṛṣṇa or his great devotees, combined with Dāsa, for men, or Dāsī, for women, both of which mean "servant." For instance, the name Kṛṣṇa Dāsa means "servant of Kṛṣṇa."

CALENDAR

This calendar is calculated for Māyāpur, West Bengal, India. The dates, derived from a lunar calendar, may vary by one day for other locations. For the exact dates for your area, go to ***www.krishna.com/calendar****.*

Because the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement comes in disciplic line from Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the calendar includes not only dates relevant to all followers of the Vedic tradition but also dates relating to Lord Caitanya's associates and prominent spiritual masters in His disciplic succession.

April 21–May 20

(*Month of Madhusūdana*)

May

1—Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Vṛndāvana Dāsa Ṭhākura, author of *Śrī Caitanya-Bhāgavata,* a biography on Lord Caitanya.

2—**Varūthinī Ekādaśī**
Fasting from grains and beans.

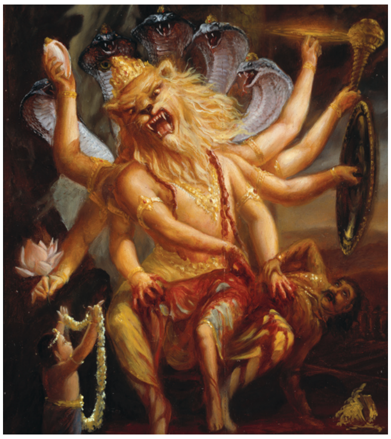
5—Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Gadādhara Paṇḍita, one of Lord Caitanya's principal associates.

8—Beginning of Candana Yātrā, the festival of anointing temple deities with sandalwood pulp for twenty-one days.

13—Appearance anniversary of Śrīmatī Sītā Devī, the consort of Lord Rāmacandra. Appearance anniversary of Śrīmatī Jāhnavā Devī, the consort of Lord Nityānanda Prabhu. Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Madhu Paṇḍita, a great devotee of Lord Caitanya.

15—**Mohinī Ekādaśī**
Fasting from grains and beans.

16—Rukmiṇī Dvādaśī, the appearance anniversary of Śrīmatī Rukmiṇī Devī, the main consort of Lord Kṛṣṇa as Dvārakādhīśa, the Lord of Dvārakā.



Lord Nṛsiṁhadeva

17—Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Jayānanda Prabhu, a dedicated disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda who helped him bring the Rathayātrā festival to the Western world.

18—Nṛsiṁha Caturdaśī, appearance anniversary of Lord Nṛsiṁhadeva, Lord Kṛṣṇa's half-man, half-lion incarnation. Fasting till dusk, followed by feasting.

20—Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Śrīnivāsa Ācārya, a follower of the six Gosvāmīs. Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Mādhavendra Purī, the spiritual master of Lord Caitanya's spiritual master (Īśvara Purī).

May 21–June 18

(*Month of Trivikrama*)

25—Disappearance anniversary of Rāmānanda Rāya, an intimate associate of Lord Caitanya.

31—**Aparā Ekādaśī**
Fasting from grains and beans.

June

1—Appearance anniversary of Vṛndāvana Dāsa Ṭhākura, author of *Śrī Caitanya-Bhāgavata,* a biography on Lord Caitanya.

13—Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa, a prominent spiritual master in the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *sampradāya* (disciplic succession), and the author of *Govinda-bhāṣya,* an important commentary on *Vedānta-sūtra.* Appearance anniversary of Śrīmatī Gaṅgāmātā Gosvāmiṇī, a prominent woman spiritual master in the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *sampradāya.*

14—**Pāṇḍava Nirjalā Ekādaśī**
Fasting from grains and beans.

June 19–July 18

(*Month of Vāmana*)

19—Disappearance of Śyāmānanda Paṇḍita, one of the principal followers of the six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana.

28—Disappearance anniversary of Śrī Śrīvāsa Paṇḍita, one of the principal associates of Lord Caitanya.

29—**Yoginī Ekādaśī**
Fasting from grains and beans.

July

3—Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Gadādhara Paṇḍita, one of the principal associates of Lord Caitanya. Also, disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura. Fasting till noon, then feasting. Also, Guṇḍicā-mārjana: festival of cleansing the Gundicha Temple in Jagannatha Puri, India.

4—Lord Jagannātha's Rathayātrā in Jagannatha Puri. Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Svarūpa Dāmodara and Śrīla Śivānanda Sena, intimate associates of Lord Caitanya.

8—Unmīlanī Mahā-dvādaśī. Fasting from grains and beans for Śayanā Ekādaśī.

In your own

Which Kṛṣṇa pastime inspires you the most, and why?

My favorite pastime

is that of Lord Caitanya and His associates distributing Kṛṣṇa consciousness. *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (Ādi 7.24) says they "plundered the storehouse of love of Godhead and ate and distributed its contents." I am inspired because they do not consider who is fit or unfit. They give spiritual love to everyone through the holy name. How? "They danced, cried, laughed, and chanted like madmen, and in this way they distributed love of Godhead." (Cc. Ādi 7.22)

Miraculously, unlike a material storehouse, as the love is distributed the supply increases hundreds of times. Best of all, this pastime continues even now, and you and I can take part in it, tasting spiritual nectar and endearing ourselves to the Lord. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "The present Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is nondifferent from the pastimes performed by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu . . . , for the same principles are being followed and the same actions performed without fail." (Cc. Antya 5.88, Purport)

I regularly go out with *harināma* (chanting) groups, travel with the Polish festival tour, attend Ratha-yātrās in various countries, and take part in the devotee festivals in Ukraine and Māyāpur. In all these places, I see many people smile, laugh, and dance, tasting some pleasure and developing spiritual desires through the congregational chanting introduced by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and His associates. I feel happy in their happiness and grateful to be allowed to take part in this glorious benedictory pastime of the Lord.

Kṛṣṇa-kṛpā Dāsa
Māyāpur, India

The pastime of Lord Balarāma

appearing as Lord Nityānanda inspires me the most because of the way He delivered Jagāi and Mādhāi. He was so merciful and compassionate to those rascals that His example makes me try to develop some compassion for the fallen souls. It also inspires me to keep going whenever I go out on book distribution, even though that service is very difficult.

Navanīta Taskara Dāsī
Gurabo, Puerto Rico

Of all the books I've read on spirituality,

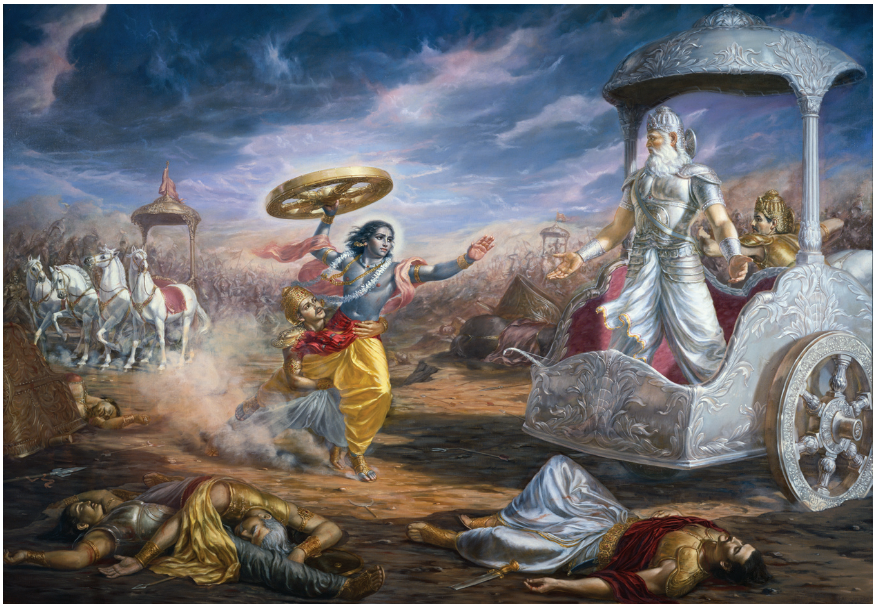
none has affected me so profoundly as *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is.* So I would say that for me Kṛṣṇa's pastime of becoming the chariot driver for His dear friend Arjuna, speaking the *Bhagavad-gītā,* and protecting Arjuna by attacking Bhīṣma is the most inspirational pastime. By instructing Arjuna, Kṛṣṇa taught everyone in the world how to make their lives successful. And He showed us that we can have an intimate relationship with Him in friendship.

Bhagavān Ācārya Dāsa
Kenosha, Wisconsin

Kṛṣṇa's pastimes with the gopīs

are the most inspiring for me. The *gopīs* dress themselves very nicely just to make Kṛṣṇa happy. When Kṛṣṇa sees them, He becomes delighted, and on seeing Kṛṣṇa delighted, the *gopīs* become millions of times more delighted, and their beauty increases. On seeing this, Kṛṣṇa, whose happiness is full, becomes happier—and the reciprocation goes on and on.

It is very difficult to understand the position of the *gopīs.* They have totally surrendered themselves unto

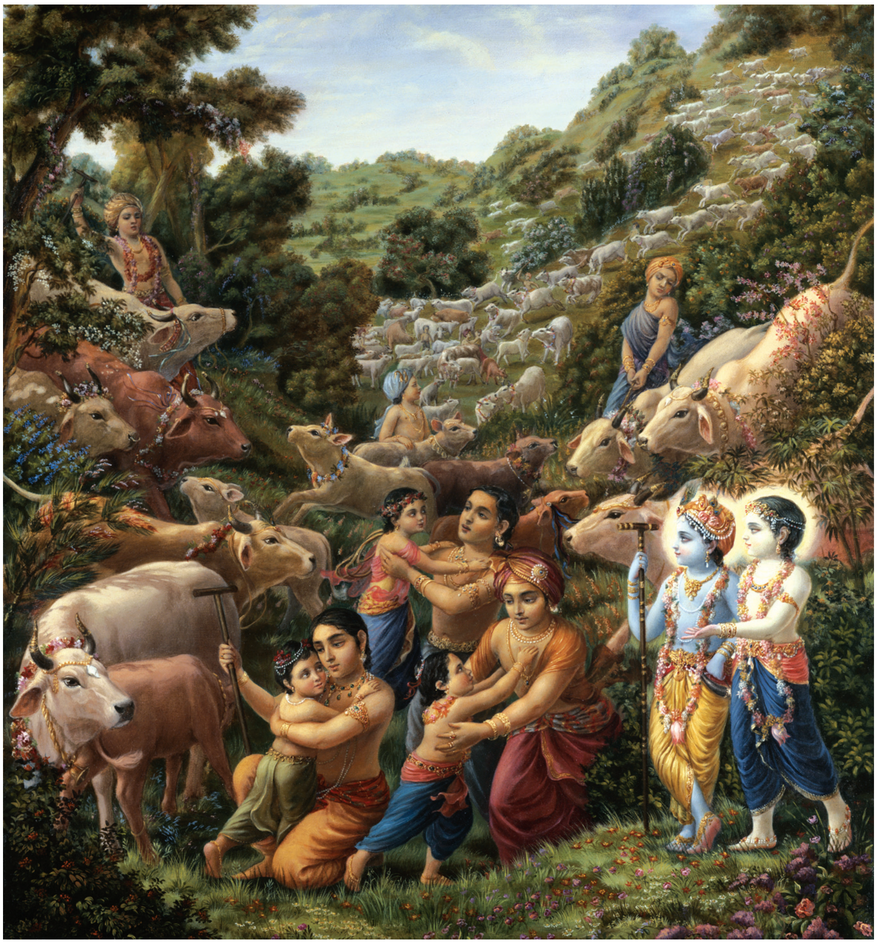


Painting by Parīkṣit Dāsa

Wanting to protect His devotee Arjuna, Kṛṣṇa angrily attacks Bhīṣma.

words . . .

Pentip photographer: Andrea Leone | Agency: Dreamstime.com



Painting by Jagat Kāruṇa Devī Dāsī

Kṛṣṇa expands Himself into all the cowherd boys and calves.

Kṛṣṇa. They don't know anything other than Him. They don't even care for their relatives or household duties. They are always absorbed in the thought of Kṛṣṇa. For them, a moment's separation from Kṛṣṇa is like a lifetime of separation.

Laveen Arora
New Delhi, India

My favorite is the pastime where Brahmā steals

all the cowherd boys and calves who were with Kṛṣṇa in the forest. After searching for them and not finding them anywhere, Śrī Kṛṣṇa knows that Brahmā has stolen them. He then expands Himself into all of His friends and calves. He can do this because He knows the entire personality of each of them—how they look, walk, speak, and so on. They are all His beloved devotees.

A lesson I draw from this pastime is that when we leave the body, nothing gets lost. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the only one who understands us completely. This thought can inspire us to love Kṛṣṇa, which has so many benefits, even in this world. For example, with Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the heart, mind, and soul, it is much easier for us to forgive those who hurt or betray us. We always want so much, but we can let go of all these material things. If all people worldwide were devotees of the devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa, then this entire earth would be a beautiful place to live.

Susanne Sticher
Hanau, Germany

My favorite Kṛṣṇa pastime

is His appearance in His hidden incarnation as Lord Caitanya. Because of Caitanya Mahāprabhu's movement to give the *mahā-mantra* to the general populace through chanting and dancing in public, ISKCON exists worldwide. My initial contact was in 1969, when I saw devotees singing and dancing on the street. Now I go out alone (sari attired), chanting in Idaho, Montana, Washington, and British Columbia.

In the Kuli Mela article (May/June '07) a *gurukuli* said, "It's as if we've reached a plateau in how we're able to preach and infiltrate society." I disagree. The simple formula that Śrīla Prabhupāda gave to ISKCON's pioneers—to chant in public, along with book distribution—holds true today. The key is that everyone did it. There could be a Hare Kṛṣṇa explosion if everyone did it today, following the lead of Lord Caitanya.

Rūpacandra Dāsī
Bonners Ferry, Idaho

HERE'S THE NEXT QUESTION:

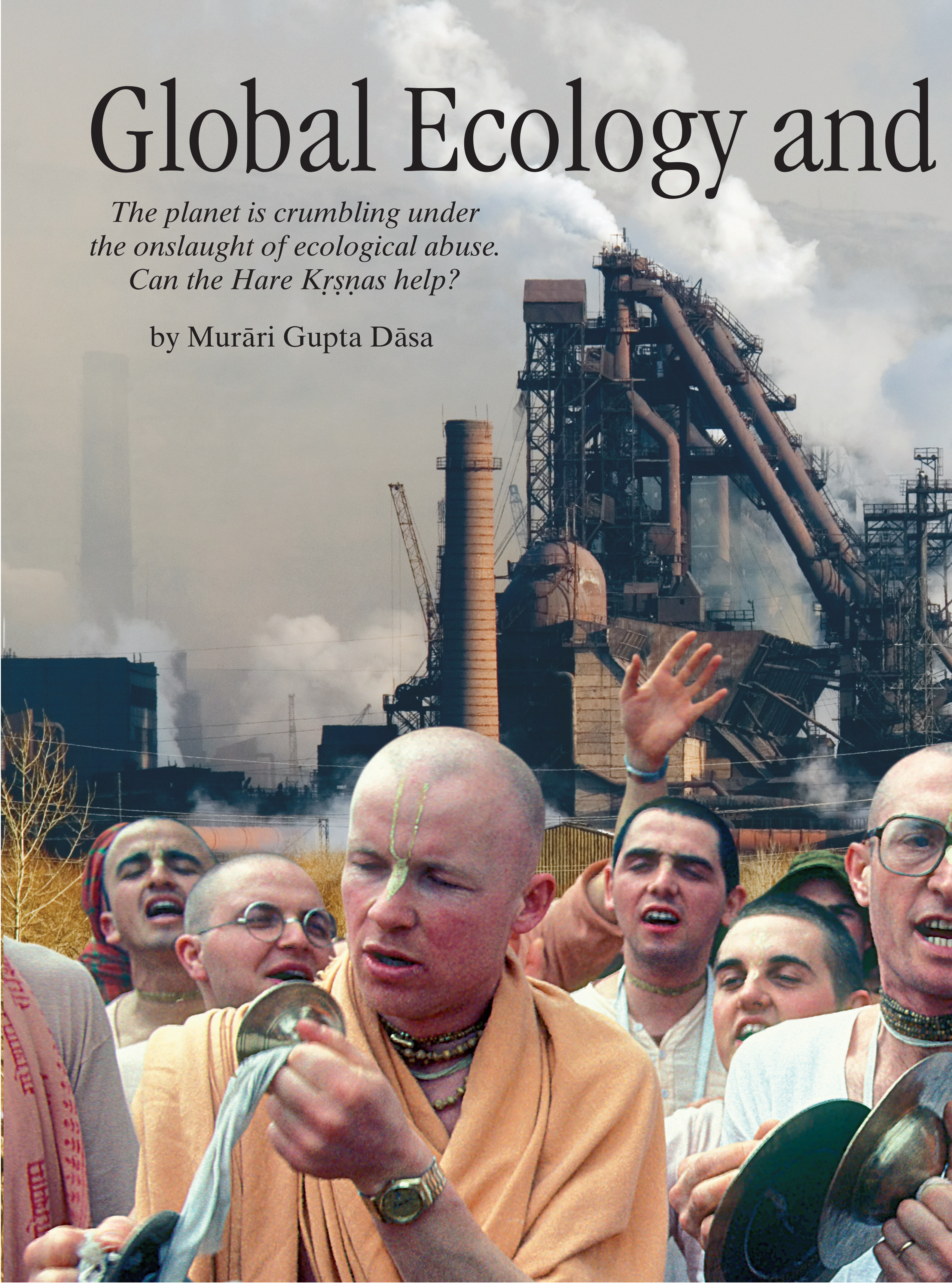
What was most memorable about your first Hare Kṛṣṇa feast?

Go to Krishna.com/inyourownwords and let us know. Please keep your answer to under 150 words. Replies will appear in our Sept/Oct issue. Deadline for submissions is June 15.

Global Ecology and

The planet is crumbling under the onslaught of ecological abuse. Can the Hare Kṛṣṇas help?

by Murāri Gupta Dāsa



Human Psychology

When my maternal aunt came to visit me in Mumbai last summer, we went with her kids to the beach.

"Unfortunately," she sighed upon seeing the ocean, "soon the sea will swallow this beautiful city."

She was referring to a report in a news magazine whose cover showed the famous Gateway of India monument in Mumbai half submerged in the ocean. The magazine quoted the findings of a UN panel on environmental pollution. By the year 2050, Mumbai and other coastal cities of the world may boast only of aquatic flora and fauna as their population. Melting ice caps will raise the ocean, pushing it to eat up enormous amounts of land along its shores. Meanwhile global warming will cause drastic drops in agriculture yield, melt Himalayan glaciers, and lead to devastating floods. Later, with no glaciers left at their sources, great rivers like the Ganges, Yamuna, and others will dry up. The result will be severe drought in most of northern India. Per capita food and water supplies will hit rock bottom. Thirty to forty percent of the flora and fauna we see today will eventually be found only in history books. In the struggle for existence, extinction will be the rule. We will see the death of the earth's ecosystem, and we'll be the gravediggers.

The findings may seem hyped to some, but there is no denying that pollution has damaged the environment. Although we have known

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of environmental pollution for decades, we've done little to control it. Americans and Australians account for nearly half of the mess, yet the thought of curtailing their lavish, wasteful lifestyles is unacceptable to them. The developing nations, on the other hand, do little besides point fingers at the developed world: "You've messed with the environment for so long; now it's our turn!"

Even if the governments of the world enact and enforce strict rules for pollution control, we won't see a permanent solution. Laws may control some current phenomena, but newer disruptions and pollutions will arise. To fight them we'll need new laws. And any proposed solution, to be effective in the long term, must also deal with the true origin of environmental problems: subtle perversions of the heart.

The Ecology of the Heart

The exploitation of nature disrupts the ecology. And the cause of the exploitative mentality is greed. Greed leads to lack of self-control. Driven by insatiable greed, people become blind to the havoc their profits may cause for others. They don't care what legacy they will leave for the next generation. The contamination of the heart spills into our surroundings.

The cure for the ills of pollution, therefore, has to begin by cleaning the heart of the subtle garbage of lust, greed, and ignorance. We have to start by purifying our thoughts. Pure thoughts lead to pure actions. Instead of contemplating selfish pursuits for sensual pleasure, we must contemplate God, the all-pure.

Then we have to change the way we live, make our lives simpler. Because of intense greed and limited resources, we exploit. But if we're content, we can work enthusiastically without exploitation. If we live simply, in harmony with the will of the Lord, and stop exploiting others, there will be no shortages. If we live a morally responsible life in line with the will of the Supreme Father, then Mother Nature will provide all we need. But if we arm-twist her to yield to our selfish desires, we stand to receive her slap in the form of horrible natural calamities and an unstable ecology.

Human life is meant for responsibility. We have to solve the problem with *śreyas,* or long-range vision, not *preyas,* the immediate promise of happiness and profit without regard for the future. We have to solve the problem in an ecologically, socially, and karmically balanced way.

We suffer because, in ignorance, we don't live in harmony with the Lord. But we can become enlightened souls and live in accordance with God's will. Then there can be a real balance of ecology. That enlightenment is possible by sincere chanting of the holy names of God.

Effective Ecology

Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted ISKCON to show the world an example of living in harmony with nature by developing self-sustained farm communities. Such communities would not depend on the industrialized world for food, clothing, shelter, electricity, and so on, but would obtain things from farm and forest. Although this vision has yet to materialize, efforts are going on throughout the world. Individually, the members of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement strive to see everything as Lord Kṛṣṇa's energy and to minimize use and wastage.

Someone may say that a moral atheist can also contribute his bit to save the environment, that being a devotee of the Supreme Lord is not required. But if you ask the moral atheist why he wants to save the environment, his reply will generally boil down to one or two reasons: either his environmentalism enhances his enjoyment, or some ecological cause simply appeals to him. Because his views and ideas are born of his mind, without solid philosophical foundation, they tend to be inconsistent and fickle. Today he wants to save the blue

(*please turn to page 58*)

BOOK SECTION: ŚRĪMAD-BHĀGAVATAM

Referred to as "the ripe fruit of the tree of Vedic literature," *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the most complete and authoritative exposition of Vedic knowledge. Five thousand years ago the great sage Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vyāsa composed this *purāṇa,* or history, to explain the essence of spiritual knowledge. Here we present *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* in serialized form, with the original Sanskrit text, transliteration, word meanings, translation, and purports by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, founder-*ācārya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

SUNĪTI ADVISES DHRUVA

Queen Sunīti tells her aggrieved son that material and spiritual success can be found only by taking shelter of the Supreme Lord.

CANTO 4: CHAPTER 8

20 यस्याङ्घ्रिपद्मं परिचर्य विश्व-
विभावनायात्तगुणाभिपत्तेः
अजोऽध्यतिष्ठत्खलु पारमेष्ठ्यं
पदं जितात्मश्वसनाभिवन्द्यम्

yasyāṅghri-padmaṁ paricarya viśva-
vibhāvanāyātta-guṇābhipatteḥ
ajo 'dhyatiṣṭhat khalu pārameṣṭhyaṁ
padaṁ jitātma-śvasanābhivandyam

yasya—whose; *aṅghri*—leg; *padmam*—lotus feet; *paricarya*—worshiping; *viśva*—universe; *vibhāvanāya*—for creating; *ātta*—received; *guṇa-abhipatteḥ*—for acquiring the required qualifications; *ajaḥ*—the unborn (Lord Brahmā); *adhyatiṣṭhat*—became situated; *khalu*—undoubtedly; *pārameṣṭhyam*—the supreme position within the universe; *padam*—position; *jita-ātma*—one who has conquered his mind; *śvasana*—by controlling the life air; *abhivandyam*—worshipable.

Sunīti continued: The Supreme Personality of Godhead is so great that simply by worshiping His lotus feet, your great-grandfather, Lord Brahmā, acquired the necessary qualifications to create this universe. Although he is unborn and is the chief of all living creatures, he is situated in that exalted post because of the mercy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, whom even great yogīs worship by controlling the mind and regulating the life air [prāṇa].

PURPORT: ① Sunīti cited the example of Lord Brahmā, who was Dhruva Mahārāja's great-grandfather. Although Lord Brahmā is also a living being, by his penance and austerity he acquired the exalted position of creator of this universe by the mercy of the Supreme Lord. ② To become successful in any attempt, one not only has to undergo severe penances and austerities, but also must be dependent on the mercy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. This indication had been given to Dhruva Mahārāja by his stepmother and was now confirmed by his own mother, Sunīti.

21 तथा मनुर्वो भगवान् पितामहो
यमेकमत्या पुरुदक्षिणैर्मखैः

(1) To encourage Dhruva to worship the Supreme Lord, why did Sunīti mention the example of Lord Brahmā, Dhruva's grandfather?
(2) Besides undergoing austerities, what else is required for success in any attempt?

इष्ट्वाभिपेदे दुरवापमन्यतो
भौमं सुखं दिव्यमथापवर्ग्यम्

tathā manur vo bhagavān pitāmaho
yam eka-matyā puru-dakṣiṇair makhaiḥ
iṣṭvābhipede duravāpam anyato
bhaumaṁ sukhaṁ divyam athāpavargyam

tathā—similarly; *manuḥ*—Svāyambhuva Manu; *vaḥ*—your; *bhagavān*—worshipable; *pitāmahaḥ*—grandfather; *yam*—unto whom; *eka-matyā*—with unflinching devotion; *puru*—great; *dakṣiṇaiḥ*—charity; *makhaiḥ*—by executing sacrifices; *iṣṭvā*—worshiping; *abhipede*—achieved; *duravāpam*—difficult to achieve; *anyataḥ*—by any other means; *bhaumam*—material; *sukham*—happiness; *divyam*—celestial; *atha*—thereafter; *āpavargyam*—liberation.

Sunīti informed her son: Your grandfather Svāyambhuva Manu executed great sacrifices with distribution of charity, and thereby, with unflinching faith and devotion, he worshiped and satisfied the Supreme Personality of Godhead. ③ By acting in that way, he achieved the greatest success in material happiness and afterwards achieved liberation, which is impossible to obtain by worshiping the demigods.

PURPORT: The success of one's life is measured by one's material happiness in this life and liberation in the next. Such success can be achieved only by the grace of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The words *eka-matyā* mean concentrating one's mind on the Lord without deviation. This process of undeviating worship of the Supreme Lord is also expressed in *Bhagavad-gītā* as *ananya-bhāk.*

"That which is impossible to obtain from any other source" is also mentioned here. "Other source" refers to worship of the demigods. It is especially stressed here that the opulence of Manu was due to his undeviating faithfulness in the transcendental service of the Lord. One who diverts his mind to worshiping many demigods to obtain material happiness is considered bereft of intelligence. If anyone wants even material happiness, he can worship the Supreme Lord without deviation, and persons who are desirous of liberation can also worship the Supreme Lord and achieve their goal of life.

(3) How was Svāyambhuva Manu able to attain material success as well as liberation?
(4) What does Prabhupāda say "should be the motto of every honest person seeking perfection in Kṛṣṇa consciousness"?
(5) Why is the Supreme Personality of Godhead known as *bhṛtya-vatsala*?
(6) In respect to one's age, what is the special significance of *bhakti-yoga*?

22 तमेव वत्साश्रय भृत्यवत्सलं
मुमुक्षुभिर्मृग्यपदाब्जपद्धतिम्
अनन्यभावे निजधर्मभाविते
मनस्यवस्थाप्य भजस्व पूरुषम्

tam eva vatsāśraya bhṛtya-vatsalaṁ
mumukṣubhir mṛgya-padābja-paddhatim
ananya-bhāve nija-dharma-bhāvite
manasy avasthāpya bhajasva pūruṣam

tam—Him; *eva*—also; *vatsa*—my dear boy; *āśraya*—take shelter; *bhṛtya-vatsalam*—of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is very kind to His devotees; *mumukṣubhiḥ*—also by persons desiring liberation; *mṛgya*—to be sought; *pada-abja*—lotus feet; *paddhatim*—system; *ananya-bhāve*—in an unflinching situation; *nija-dharma-bhāvite*—being situated in one's original constitutional position; *manasi*—unto the mind; *avasthāpya*—placing; *bhajasva*—go on executing devotional service; *pūruṣam*—the Supreme Person.

My dear boy, you also should take shelter of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is very kind to His devotees. Persons seeking liberation from the cycle of birth and death always take shelter of the lotus feet of the Lord in devotional service. Becoming purified by executing your allotted occupation, just situate the Supreme Personality of Godhead in your heart, and without deviating for a moment, engage always in His service.

PURPORT: The system of *bhakti-yoga* described by Queen Sunīti to her son is the standard way of God realization. Everyone can continue in his constitutional occupational duties and at the same time keep the Supreme Personality of Godhead within his heart. This was also instructed by the Lord Himself to Arjuna in *Bhagavad-gītā:* "Go on fighting, but keep Me within your mind." ④ That should be the motto of every honest person seeking perfection in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

⑤ In this connection, Queen Sunīti advised her son that the Supreme Personality of Godhead is known as *bhṛtya-vatsala,* which indicates that He is very kind to His devotees. She said, "You came to me crying, having been insulted by your stepmother, but I am unable to do any good for you. But Kṛṣṇa is so kind to His devotees that if you go to Him, then the combined kindness of millions of mothers like me will be surpassed by His affectionate and tender dealings. When everyone else fails to mitigate one's misery, Kṛṣṇa is able to help the devotee."

Queen Sunīti also stressed that the process of approaching the Supreme Personality of Godhead is not easy, but is sought after by great sages who are very advanced in spiritual realization. Queen Sunīti also indicated by her instruction that Dhruva Mahārāja was only a small child, five years old, and it was not possible for him to purify himself by the way of *karma-kāṇḍa.* ⑥ But by the process of *bhakti-yoga,* even a child less than five years old, or anyone of any age, can be purified. That is the special significance of *bhakti-yoga.* Therefore she advised him not to accept worship of the demigods or any other process, but simply to take to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and the result would be all perfection. As soon as one places the Supreme Personality of Godhead within one's heart, everything becomes easy and successful.

23 नान्यं ततः पद्मपलाशलोचनाद्
दुःखच्छिदं ते मृगयामि कञ्चन
यो मृग्यते हस्तगृहीतपद्मया
श्रियेतरैरङ्ग विमृग्यमाणया

nānyaṁ tataḥ padma-palāśa-locanād
duḥkha-cchidaṁ te mṛgayāmi kañcana
yo mṛgyate hasta-gṛhīta-padmayā
śriyetarair aṅga vimṛgyamāṇayā

na anyam—no others; *tataḥ*—therefore; *padma-palāśa-locanāt*—from the lotus-eyed Supreme Personality of Godhead; *duḥkha-chidam*—one who can mitigate others' difficulties; *te*—your; *mṛgayāmi*—I am searching after; *kañcana*—anyone else; *yaḥ*—who; *mṛgyate*—searches; *hasta-gṛhīta-padmayā*—taking a lotus flower in the hand; *śriyā*—the goddess of fortune; *itaraiḥ*—by others; *aṅga*—my dear boy; *vimṛgyamāṇayā*—one who is worshiped.

My dear Dhruva, as far as I am concerned, I do not find anyone who can mitigate your distress but the Supreme Personality of Godhead, whose eyes are like lotus petals. Many demigods such as Lord Brahmā seek the pleasure of the goddess of fortune, but the goddess of fortune herself, with a lotus flower in her hand, is always ready to render service to the Supreme Lord.

PURPORT: Sunīti pointed out herewith that the benediction received from the Supreme Personality of Godhead and that received from the demigods are not on an equal level. Foolish persons say that no matter whom one worships one will get the same result, but actually that is not a fact. In *Bhagavad-gītā* it is also said that benedictions received from the demigods are all temporary and are meant for the less intelligent. In other words, because the demigods are all materialistically conditioned souls, although they are situated in very exalted positions, their benedictions cannot be permanent. Permanent benediction is spiritual benediction, since a spirit soul is eternal. It is also said in *Bhagavad-gītā* that only persons who have lost their intelligence go to worship the demigods. Therefore Sunīti told her son that he should not seek the mercy of the demigods, but should directly approach the Supreme Personality of Godhead to mitigate his misery.

Material opulences are controlled by the Supreme Personality of Godhead through His different potencies and specifically the goddess of fortune. Therefore, those who are after material opulences seek the pleasure or mercy of the goddess of fortune. Even the highly placed demigods worship the goddess of fortune, but the goddess of fortune, Mahā-Lakṣmī herself, is always seeking the pleasure of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. ⑦ Anyone, therefore, who takes to the worship of the Supreme Lord automatically receives the blessings of the goddess of fortune. At this stage of his life, Dhruva Mahārāja was seeking material opulences, and his mother advised rightly that even for material opulences it is better to worship not the demigods but the Supreme Lord.

Although a pure devotee does not seek benedictions from the Supreme Lord for material advancement, it is stated in *Bhagavad-gītā* that pious persons go to the Lord even for material benedictions. ⑧ A person who goes to the Supreme Personality of Godhead for material gain is gradually purified in association with the Supreme Lord. Thus he becomes free from all material desires and is elevated to the platform of spiritual life. Unless one is raised to the spiritual platform, it is not possible for him to completely transcend all material contamination.

Sunīti, the mother of Dhruva, was a farseeing woman, and therefore she advised her son to worship the Supreme Lord and no one else. The Lord is described herein as lotus eyed (*padma-palāśa-locanāt*). When a person is fatigued, if he sees a lotus flower all his fatigue can be immediately reduced to nil. Similarly, when an aggrieved person sees the lotus face of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, immediately all his grief is reduced. A lotus flower is also an insignia in the hand of Lord Viṣṇu as well as in the hand of the goddess of fortune. The worshipers of the goddess of fortune and Lord Viṣṇu together are certainly very opulent in all respects, even in material life. The Lord is sometimes described as *śiva-viriñci-nutam,* which means that Lord Śiva and Lord Brahmā also offer their respectful obeisances unto the lotus feet of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Nārāyaṇa.

मैत्रेय उवाच
24 एवं सञ्जल्पितं मातुराकर्ण्यार्थागमं वचः
सन्नियम्यात्मनात्मानं निश्चक्राम पितुः पुरात्

maitreya uvāca
evaṁ sañjalpitaṁ mātur
ākarṇyārthāgamaṁ vacaḥ
sanniyamyātmanātmānaṁ
niścakrāma pituḥ purāt

(7) If one desires opulence, why should one worship the Supreme Lord rather than the goddess of fortune?
(8) Why are persons who desire material gain encouraged to approach the Supreme Lord?

maitreyaḥ uvāca—the great sage Maitreya said; *evam*—thus; *sañjalpitam*—spoken together; *mātuḥ*—from the mother; *ākarṇya*—hearing; *artha-āgamam*—purposeful; *vacaḥ*—words; *sanniyamya*—controlling; *ātmanā*—by the mind; *ātmānam*—own self; *niścakrāma*—got out; *pituḥ*—of the father; *purāt*—from the house.

The great sage Maitreya continued: The instruction of Dhruva Mahārāja's mother, Sunīti, was actually meant for fulfilling his desired objective. Therefore, after deliberate consideration and with intelligence and fixed determination, he left his father's house.

PURPORT: Both the mother and the son were lamenting Dhruva Mahārāja's having been insulted by his stepmother and his father's not having taken any step on this issue. But mere lamentation is useless—one should find out the means to mitigate one's lamentation. ⑨ Thus both mother and son decided to take shelter of the lotus feet of the Lord because that is the only solution to all material problems.

It is indicated in this connection that Dhruva Mahārāja left his father's capital city to go to a secluded place to search out the Supreme Personality of Godhead. It is the instruction of Prahlāda Mahārāja also that if one is seeking peace of mind he should free himself from all contamination of family life and take shelter of the Supreme Godhead by going to the forest. ⑩ To the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava this forest is the forest of Vṛndā, or Vṛndāvana. If one takes shelter of Vṛndāvana under Vṛndāvaneśvarī, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, certainly all the problems of his life are solved very easily.

25 नारदस्तदुपाकर्ण्य ज्ञात्वा तस्य चिकीर्षितम्
स्पृष्ट्वा मूर्धन्यघघ्नेन पाणिना प्राह विस्मितः

nāradas tad upākarṇya
jñātvā tasya cikīrṣitam
spṛṣṭvā mūrdhany agha-ghnena
pāṇinā prāha vismitaḥ

nāradaḥ—the great sage Nārada; *tat*—that; *upākarṇya*—overhearing; *jñātvā*—and knowing; *tasya*—his (Dhruva Mahārāja's); *cikīrṣitam*—activities; *spṛṣṭvā*—by touching; *mūrdhani*—on the head; *agha-ghnena*—which can drive away all sinful activities; *pāṇinā*—by the hand; *prāha*—said; *vismitaḥ*—being surprised.

(9) Why did Dhruva and Sunīti decide to take shelter of the lotus feet of the Lord?
(10) To what forest do Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas go to take shelter of the Supreme Godhead?
(11) Why was Nārada Muni aware of the conversation between Dhruva and Sunīti?
(12) Why did Kṛṣṇa send His representative Nārada to initiate Dhruva Mahārāja?

The great sage Nārada overheard this news, and understanding all the activities of Dhruva Mahārāja, he was struck with wonder. He approached Dhruva, and touching the boy's head with his all-virtuous hand, he spoke as follows.

PURPORT: When Dhruva Mahārāja was talking with his mother, Sunīti, of all the incidents that had taken place in the palace, Nārada was not present. Thus the question may be raised how Nārada overheard all these topics. ⑪ The answer is that Nārada is *trikāla-jña;* he is so powerful that he can understand the past, future, and present of everyone's heart, just like the Supersoul, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Therefore, after understanding the strong determination of Dhruva Mahārāja, Nārada came to help him.

It may be explained in this way: The Supreme Personality of Godhead is present in everyone's heart, and as soon as He understands that a living entity is serious about entering devotional service, He sends His representative. In this way Nārada was sent to Dhruva Mahārāja. This is explained in the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta. Guru-kṛṣṇa-prasāde pāya bhakti-latā-bīja:* by the grace of the spiritual master and Kṛṣṇa, one can enter into devotional service. ⑫ Because of Dhruva Mahārāja's determination, Kṛṣṇa, the Supersoul, immediately sent His representative, Nārada, to initiate him.

26 अहो तेजः क्षत्रियाणां मानभङ्गममृष्यताम्
बालोऽप्ययं हृदा धत्ते यत्समातुरसद्वचः

aho tejaḥ kṣatriyāṇāṁ
māna-bhaṅgam amṛṣyatām
bālo 'py ayaṁ hṛdā dhatte
yat samātur asad-vacaḥ

aho—how surprising it is; *tejaḥ*—power; *kṣatriyāṇām*—of the *kṣatriyas; māna-bhaṅgam*—hurting the prestige; *amṛṣyatām*—unable to tolerate; *bālaḥ*—only a child; *api*—although; *ayam*—this; *hṛdā*—at heart; *dhatte*—has taken; *yat*—that which; *sa-mātuḥ*—of the stepmother; *asat*—unpalatable; *vacaḥ*—words.

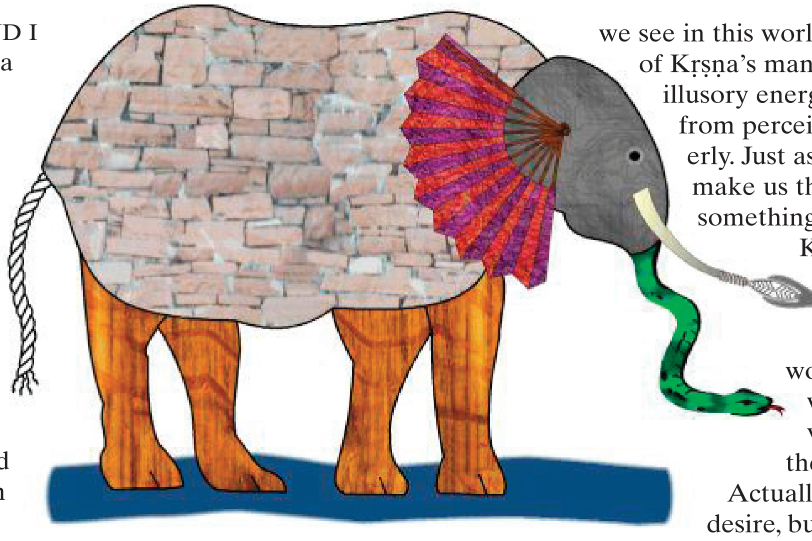
How wonderful are the powerful kṣatriyas. They cannot tolerate even a slight infringement upon their prestige. Just imagine! This boy is only a small child, yet harsh words from his stepmother proved unbearable to him.

[*Continued in the next issue.*]

RELATIVITY AND THE PATH TO THE ABSOLUTE

Because many factors influence the way we see the world, too much faith in our own perspective can be materially and spiritually dangerous.

by Arcana Siddhī Devī Dāsī



This nineteenth-century painting by John Godfrey Saxe depicts what the elephant in the blind-men-and-the-elephant proverb would look like as the sum of the blind men's relative conceptions. (See page 45.)

MY HUSBAND AND I were counseling a couple and making progress, but then we reached an impasse. The husband insisted that his perceptions of the couple's interactions were reality and anything different from those perceptions was false or illusory. In other words, his wife's view was wrong if it differed from his. My husband and I did our best to help him broaden his perspective. We hoped he could entertain the possibility of seeing things differently. But he wouldn't budge from his position, and he ended the couple's counseling.

After this incident I reflected on a heated debate I'd had with a friend of mine before I became a devotee. He insisted that there was no absolute reality, only our individual subjective reality, while my stance was that there was an absolute reality—we just couldn't perceive it. He insisted that my position was just my subjective reality. We both walked away frustrated and angry.

Later, after becoming a devotee, I discovered that according to the Vedic teachings my assertions were right. But now I could understand something about the nature of that absolute reality: It is Kṛṣṇa. Everything we see in this world comes from one of Kṛṣṇa's many energies. But His illusory energy (*māyā*) keeps us from perceiving things properly. Just as a magician can make us think we're seeing something that's not there, Kṛṣṇa uses illusion to create our supposed reality.

One might wonder why God would want to prevent us from seeing the truth?

Actually, that isn't His desire, but rather He is supporting our own desire to enjoy separately from Him. When we are totally disconnected from our Lord, we cannot perceive reality. Instead, we believe in an illusory "reality," like people under the spell of a stage hypnotist who think they're a duck or a dog. In fact, by *māyā's* influence the soul in the material world does think it is a duck or a dog or a man or a woman. But that relative reality is temporary and will vanish at death. Only the eternal soul endures.

Dhruva Overcomes Illusion

Sometimes even great devotees become bewildered by the illusions of the material energy. Dhruva Mahārāja was a powerful king and devotee of the Lord. Yet when avenging his brother's death, Dhruva was bewildered by the magical feats of his opponents, the Yakṣas, who were skilled at creating wonderful illusions. Dhruva believed he was in the midst of an environmental holocaust. He saw trunks of bodies raining down from the sky along with dangerous weapons and great boulders. He saw a tsunami and an array of wild animals coming to devour him.

Divine energy protects great devotees. For Dhruva, that divine energy came in the form of merciful sages who arrived to instruct him on how to dispel the illusion. Following their instructions, Dhruva remembered Kṛṣṇa and His holy names and was able to see through the illusions created by the Yakṣas. This same divine shelter is available to all of us. When we chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, the illusion of the material realm begins to lift. Kṛṣṇa sends us help in the form of spiritual guides to teach us how to dispel the material illusions and reawaken our dormant love for God. Then we become perfectly situated in the absolute reality.

When we chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, the illusion of the material realm begins to lift.

Brain Filter

The husband we were counseling was sure there was an absolute reality, but he mistakenly believed he could perceive it through imperfect senses. Science tells us that at every moment we are bombarded with over six million bits of information that come streaming in through our senses. Scientists postulate that the reticular activating system located at the base of the brain acts as a gatekeeper to prevent us from becoming overwhelmed by this overload of information. This filtering system allows information into our conscious awareness based on our experiences and our beliefs about ourselves.

In *Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa explains to his friend and disciple Arjuna that He is the source of all remembrance, knowledge, and forgetfulness. Kṛṣṇa, as the Supersoul within our heart, sanctions what information comes into our conscious awareness. According to our desires, Kṛṣṇa strengthens our faith in certain perceptions or ideals so as to support a particular experience within the material realm.

While modern science and ancient wisdom aren't always in harmony, scientific explanations can sometimes be useful in making philosophical points. For example, we might say that our *prārabdha* (manifest) karma appears through the medium of chromosomes or DNA. Similarly, the Supersoul may, through the medium of the reticular system, filter out information contrary to our beliefs. For example, if people tell me I'm a nice person, I might reject their perceptions, thinking they want to sell me something or manipulate me in some way.

Besides this information filter in the brain, our senses also make mistakes. We might see a rope and think it is a snake. And depending on how invested we are in convincing others about what we think, we might cheat or lie about our data. An experimenter's desire for a particular outcome often contaminates scientific experiments.

Until we have purified our consciousness, our conditioned nature will influence our thoughts and our ability to understand even absolute knowledge descending from pure sources. For instance, if because of my upbringing I believe that God is vindictive and angry, then I will filter out information that shows how loving and merciful He is to His devotees. So it is prudent to question our own perception of reality and stay open to input from others, especially spiritually advanced persons.

Stages of Thinking

Another aspect of our psychological makeup that affects our ability to perceive absolute reality is our cognitive development, or the way our thought processes have grown. William Perry, a developmental psychologist, describes stages of cognitive development I feel can be useful to devotees in distinguishing between fanaticism and enlightenment. The first stage is black-and-white thinking, where we can't entertain viewpoints different from our own and our thinking is rigid and dogmatic. Some of us don't move beyond this stage; the rest progress to relativistic thinking and hear and consider different perspectives and opinions. Relativistic thinking helps people start and keep intimate relationships. The final stage, which Perry says is rarely achieved, is commitment. A person on this stage has fixed beliefs but tolerates others' perceptions. According to Perry's research, only a select few persons of highly developed spiritual consciousness could be classified in this final stage.

At first glance the black-and-white thinker and the committed thinker may look alike: They're both convinced of their beliefs, unlike the relativistic thinker (stage two). But the committed thinker will oblige and accept others, whereas the black-and-white thinker is often fanatical and unbending. Terrorists are stuck in stage one and create havoc in the world by thinking their subjective reality is the only truth. Their mission is to convert others to their heinous way of thinking. As recent history has shown, this kind of sectarian thinking in the guise of religion is extremely dangerous.

Dangers of Sectarianism

Śrīla Prabhupāda, a superlative committed Vaiṣṇava, stressed many times that his society, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, was nonsectarian. He wasn't invested in converting people from one religion to another; he wanted to help people develop love for God. Prabhupāda's predecessor Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura listed sectarianism as one of the main obstacles that impede spiritual progress, because it creates problems in finding a guru and associating with sincere devotees who may be outside one's tightly defined group.

In accepting the Absolute Truth, we have to remember that we live in a relative world and our perceptions and experiences are subjective. If I feel cold and someone else feels hot, is it hot or cold? To say "I feel cold" expresses my subjective reality, but to say "It is cold" imposes my subjective reality on others. Prabhupāda teaches us not to rely upon our subjective reality to understand truth. He uses the example of a group of blind men trying to figure out what an elephant is by touching it. One man, feeling the trunk, declares the creature to be a great snake. Another, putting his arms around a leg, surmises the elephant to be a huge pillar. The limited, subjective perception of each man in the group fails to correctly identify the elephant. To arrive at the truth, they need help from a man with sight.

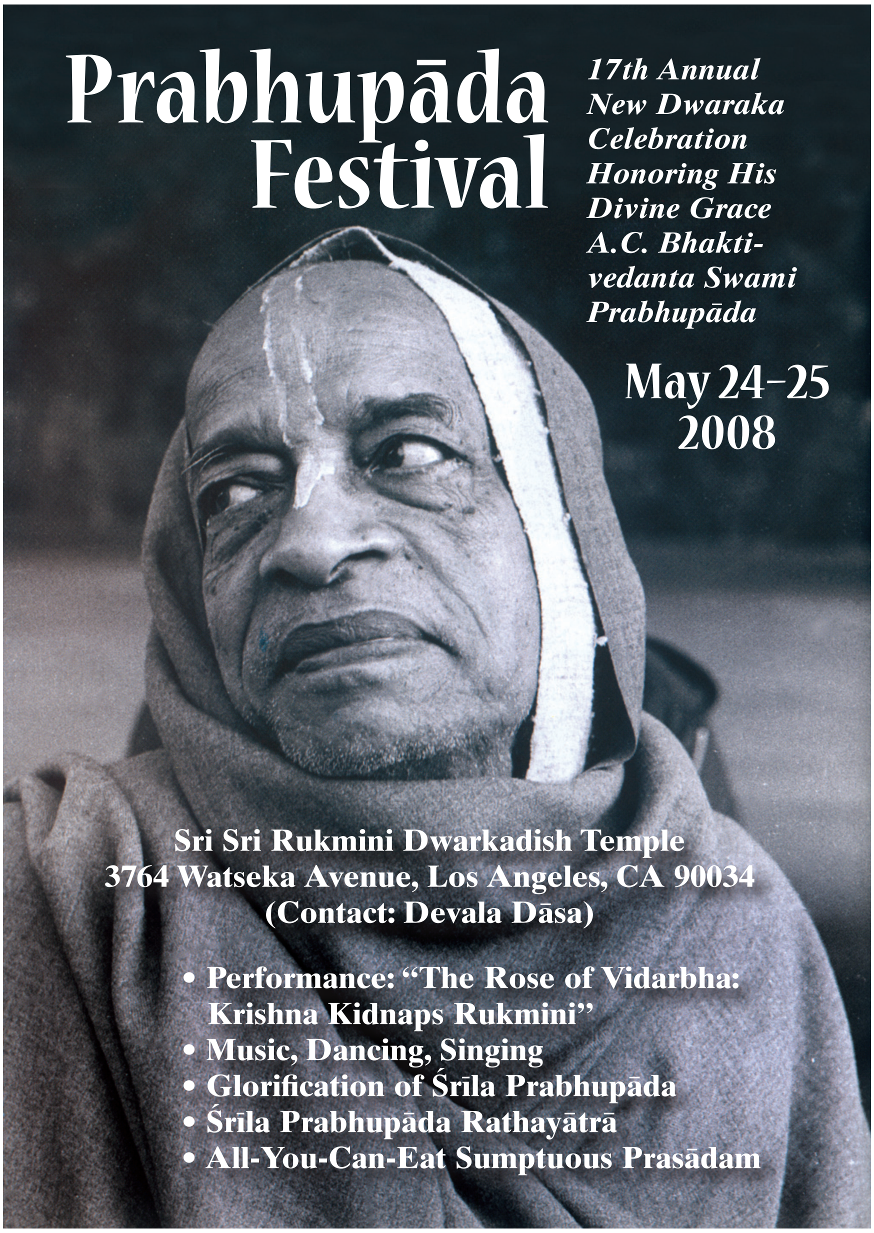
Relativity will influence us until our conditioned nature is purified. Therefore, Prabhupāda teaches us to cultivate a humble attitude and serve others, especially advanced souls. Only by their mercy can we understand the realm of the Absolute. When we stop asserting our impressions and perceptions as the absolute standard and accept the experiences of others, we become more loving.

This kind of thinking will help increase our effectiveness in spreading the teachings of Vaiṣṇavism, as well as in sustaining relationships with other Vaiṣṇavas, including our spouses. Black-and-white thinking makes for a rocky marriage and a high probability of divorce. If we see ourselves entrenched in asserting absolutes from our relative perspective, we should pray to progress beyond this stage of thinking.

Moving beyond black-and-white thinking will help us advance spiritually. Then one day we will enter the absolute reality, where our subjective perceptions are perfect. At that stage, no longer contaminated by the material energy, we come under the influence of Kṛṣṇa's internal energy and view the spiritual reality through our particular relationship with Kṛṣṇa. The cowherd boys see Kṛṣṇa as their best friend, the elder cowherds see Him as their son, and the young cowherd girls see Him as their lover. They all feel that their position is the best, and subjectively they are all correct.

By sincerity, service, and mercy we can transcend material existence and enter a world devoid of tension between the subjective and the absolute realities. In the material word, the relative and the absolute compete for supremacy and can destroy relationships. In the spiritual world, the relative and the absolute work together to accentuate loving relationships. Once going there, we will never have to come back to a world of relativity where "it's my way or the highway." ❁

Arcana Siddhī Devī Dāsī was initiated by Prabhupāda in 1976. She lives with her husband and son in Sandy Ridge, North Carolina, where she works as a family therapist.



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THE VEDIC OBSERVER

Transcendental Commentary on the Issues of the Day

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Vanishing Heroes and Whining Fans

by Vraja Vihārī Dāsa

I RUBBED MY EYES in disbelief. It was indeed my hero. I had been collecting his photographs and articles, splashed in all the dailies, for over a decade now. His cricketing and writing exploits were well known, and my room was dedicated to his glorious life. As I saw him look somewhat lost across the street, I grabbed my chance to extol my love for him. My mind raced through a thousand things I could tell him. After all, I wasn't just any nineteen-year-old—I was his greatest fan! I ran across the street, panting and huffing, and introduced myself bashfully.

Without giving me even half a smile, and only pretending to acknowledge me, he hurriedly looked in all directions.

"Can I help you?" I volunteered.

"I need a taxi. Can you call me one?"

I dashed away and quickly returned with a cab, only to see him speeding off in another one. And before the two of us could muse over those nail-biting cricket climaxes, the hard hitting articles, and all the wonderful, heart-wrenching moments, he was gone.

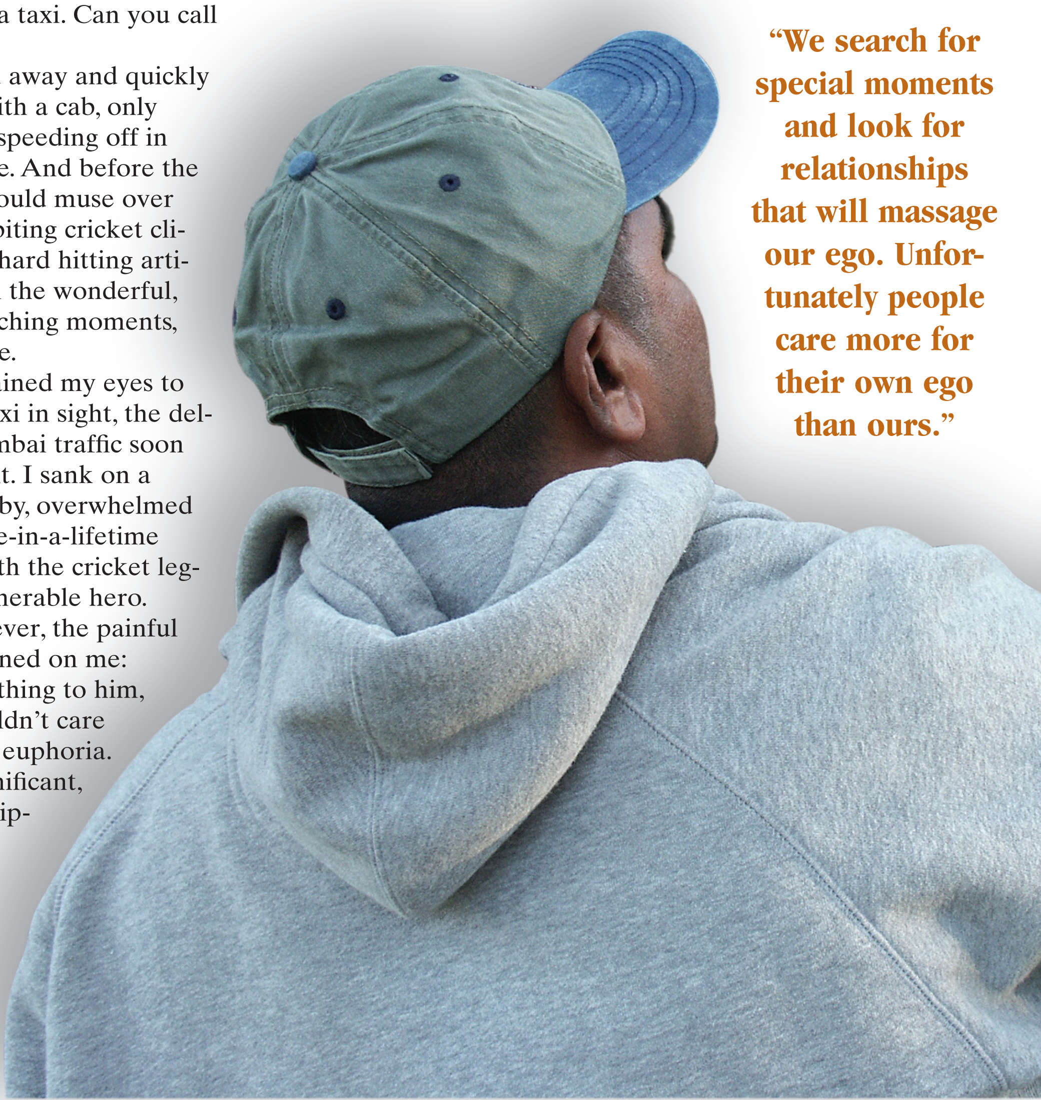
As I strained my eyes to keep the taxi in sight, the deluge of Mumbai traffic soon consumed it. I sank on a bench nearby, overwhelmed by this once-in-a-lifetime meeting with the cricket legend, my venerable hero. Soon, however, the painful reality dawned on me: I meant nothing to him, and he couldn't care less for my euphoria. I was insignificant, and the reciprocation I desired so badly from him wouldn't be coming.

Desperate To Be Special

Years later, as I was shopping in the Indian supermarket of spirituality, I chanced upon a flyer that announced, "Discover the most special person: you." I couldn't help contrasting this and similar other propaganda with my earlier painful experience, where I was dismissed as of no consequence.

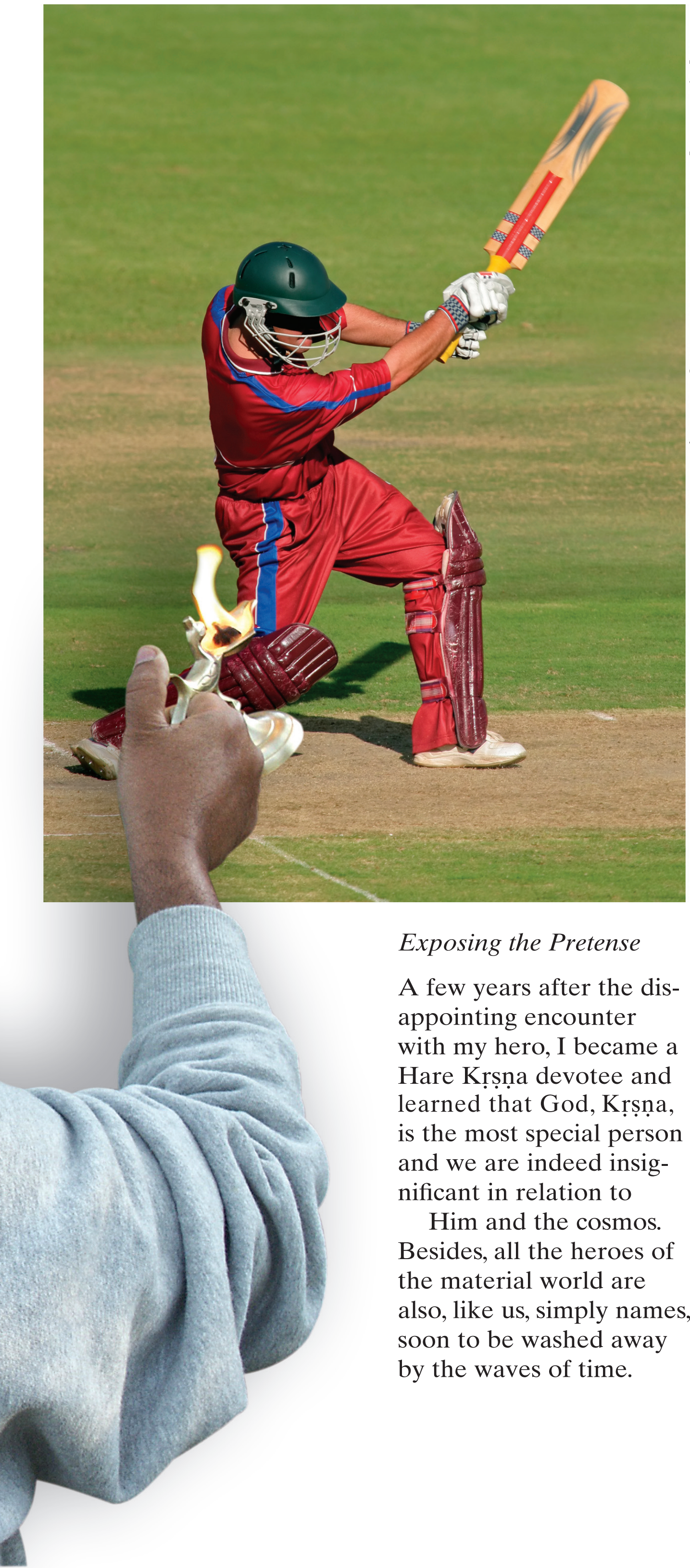
Ads, billboards, movies, product covers—they make us feel we're the center of the universe, with the world at our fingertips. But reality throws up unpleasant surprises, and our letdowns belie the tall claims of the ad companies. These letdowns occur quite too often to be dismissed as pessimists' excuses. Meanwhile we march on, hoping the next encounter with the "real" world will turn things our way and make us feel special; and the "reel" world's there to keep us optimistic and positive. As we feed our consciousness with deceptive self-centered media images, we search for special moments and look for relationships that will massage our ego. Unfortunately people care more for their own ego than ours. The result is a far cry from the desperate reciprocation we crave. Relationships often turn sour and end in separation or divorce. The natural fallout of ego clashes is distrust and conflict, leading to spiraling domestic and social violence.

The desperate search for self-worth leads many to seek a spiritual path, as evidenced



"We search for special moments and look for relationships that will massage our ego. Unfortunately people care more for their own ego than ours."

by the booming "spiritual" business in India. But too many sects only bolster our self-obsession by encouraging us to believe we are God. They conjure up attractive phrases and synonyms for God such as "love," "fun and joy," and "peace and beauty." They comfort us with clever words and promise us peace through silent meditation or breath control. Riding on a newfound mental plane, we announce that life's incomplete without "spirituality." A few of us manage to see through this sham and are haunted by a deep sense of betrayal at the hands of myriad so-called gurus.



Cricket player: © Ecophoto / Dreamstime.com. Montage: Yamarāja Dāsa

Exposing the Pretense

A few years after the disappointing encounter with my hero, I became a Hare Kṛṣṇa devotee and learned that God, Kṛṣṇa, is the most special person and we are indeed insignificant in relation to Him and the cosmos. Besides, all the heroes of the material world are also, like us, simply names, soon to be washed away by the waves of time. Recalling my teenage encounter with one such hero, I felt how true was the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Many people, however, are appalled at this bold declaration of God's greatness and our insignificance because this reality is precisely what they try to forget. When confronted and exposed, a thief or a fugitive is only sorry and angry. The scriptures' portrayal of the harsh reality of this world unsettles the die-hard hell-bent on enjoying here.

Kṛṣṇa's Love Makes Us Special

A closer look at Kṛṣṇa's teachings reveals the position of every living entity as not simply inconsequential but also simultaneously special. We are all part of God, Kṛṣṇa, and our constitutional position is to serve Him, the Supreme, all-loving Lord. This service not only fills our heart with a level of happiness that transcends ordinary bodily pleasures, but it also reinstates us in our special position. Each soul has a unique relationship with Kṛṣṇa in the spiritual world, our original home. Although tiny and insignificant compared to the Lord, we can conquer Him through the process of loving devotional service.

A finger is insignificant when separated from the body but has a special place when connected to the hand. A screw is useless when separated from the machine but when reconnected performs a unique function. It is our relationship with Kṛṣṇa that makes us special. Separated from Him, no hero worship can make our lives significant.

Prayerful contemplation of our insignificance compared to the all-great Lord and His numerous servants makes us humble. This humility softens our heart and captures Kṛṣṇa's heart. In stark contrast to superstar adulation, where even the most passionate enthusiasts are left high and dry, a spiritual approach based on humility and service transforms unknown servants into glorious recipients of the Lord's mercy and love.

Kṛṣṇa Reciprocates With His Fans

Unlike modern heroes who may never care to know how much their fans love them, Kṛṣṇa, present in the heart as the Supersoul, knows our smallest desire and is ever ready to reciprocate with our longing to love Him. In fact, Kṛṣṇa is more eager to receive us in His loving embrace than we are to feel the warmth of His presence in our lives.

Examples of the Lord's reciprocation with His "fans," or devotees, fill the scriptures. While a hero of this world may be selective about the company he keeps, Kṛṣṇa responds to a devotee's call irrespective of sex, status, influence, or even species. Mṛgāri, a barbaric hunter who half killed animals, enjoyed watching them die in excruciating pain. The Lord's confidential devotee Nārada Muni transformed Mṛgāri, who was soon calling the Lord by chanting His names. Kṛṣṇa heard Mṛgāri's call and filled his heart with love and compassion. Mṛgāri went on to become a great saint who showed unparalleled kindness to all living beings.

Kṛṣṇa heard the call of Dhruva, although the boy was merely five years old.

Kṛṣṇa doesn't care for one's material intellect and sophistication. This is confirmed by His loving dealings with the monkeys of Vṛndāvana and His timely reciprocation with the elephant Gajendra, who in danger called out for the Lord. The hunchback Kubjā and the impoverished Sudāmā were definitely not among the rich and famous. Vidura, son of a maidservant, was excluded from the elites of Hastinapura. Kṛṣṇa went out of His way to answer the pleas of all these devotees.

The Fate of Fleeting Heroes

What about the heroes I left behind for Kṛṣṇa? If I am insignificant, so is the cricket champion, who a few years down the line is now bereft of media glare and if fortunate may avoid a disgraceful omission from the squad for a bout of poor performance. The plight of beauty queens, macho men, and political messiahs is no different. The most sensational heartthrobs of the '80s are unsung today, replaced by a new batch of pretty faces, only to be soon followed by another fresh set.

Daily, new heroes fill the billboards, television screens, and covers of leading magazines, and the country goes gaga over them. Young men and women madly follow these stars and etch their names in the flying pages of history. And how significant are they, really, even in terms of this one planet? Our neighbor China, the most populous nation in the world, has no clue about cricket or Bollywood, and its one billion plus citizens are busy with their own heroes. Precious human energy is thus wasted in vigorously pursuing ephemeral goals.

Making Way for the Real Hero

As for devotees of Kṛṣṇa, it's goodbye to a tragic life in a hypocritical and pretentious all's-well world. Rather than seek to be great, it's time to live in a world centered on service to the great. It's this attitude that conquers Him. As a response to our service and to our sincere calling through chanting of the holy names, Kṛṣṇa floods our heart with spiritual joy. We don't need to calm down the passion for hero worship; just change the object. With Kṛṣṇa as the center, there are no more letdowns. And despite all the charges of painting a gloomy picture of the world, the bright-faced Hare Kṛṣṇas continue to happily chant and dance to Kṛṣṇa's tunes.

Vraja Vihārī Dāsa, MBA, serves full-time at ISKCON Chowpatty (Mumbai) and teaches Kṛṣṇa consciousness to students at various colleges.

GROW FOOD

(*continued from page 8*)

prayers to Kṛṣṇa and worship Him; everyone can. Kṛṣṇa says,

> *māṁ hi pārtha vyapāśritya*
> *ye 'pi syuḥ pāpa-yonayaḥ*
> *striyo vaiśyās tathā śūdrās*
> *te 'pi yanti parāṁ gatim*

"O son of Pṛthā, those who take shelter in Me, though they be of lower birth—women, *vaiśyas* [merchants], and *śūdras* [workers]—can attain the supreme destination." Even those lower than the *śūdras* can also take advantage of worshiping Kṛṣṇa. So our work should be performed for executing *yajña.*

The Yajña for This Age

Formerly *yajña* was performed very gorgeously. So many mounds of grains and so much ghee was put into the fire. But in this age, Kali-yuga, there is insufficient ghee and grains to offer in the *yajña* fire. Therefore in this Kali-yuga, *yajña* is performed by chanting the holy name of the Lord.

So my only submission is that you produce enough food grains. Don't waste your time by producing tobacco. In the scriptures, tobacco is forbidden:

> *abhyarthitas tadā tasmai*
> *sthānāni kalaye dadau*
> *dyūtaṁ pānaṁ striyaḥ sūnā*
> *yatrādharmaś catur-vidhaḥ*

"Mahārāja Parīkṣit, thus being petitioned by the personality of Kali, gave him permission to reside in places where gambling, drinking, prostitution, and animal slaughter were performed." [*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.17.38]. *Pāna* means smoking also. These four things—gambling, intoxication, illicit sex, and animal slaughter—are considered sinful activities. And in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (7.28) it is said,

> *yeṣāṁ tv anta-gataṁ pāpaṁ*
> *janānāṁ puṇya-karmaṇām*
> *te dvandva-moha-nirmuktā*
> *bhajante māṁ dṛḍha-vratāḥ*

Unless one is free from sinful activities, he cannot be fully engaged in worshiping the Supreme Lord, Kṛṣṇa. So anyone who wants the real benefit of human life must give up these four principles of sinful life.

Kṛṣṇa therefore says to everyone,

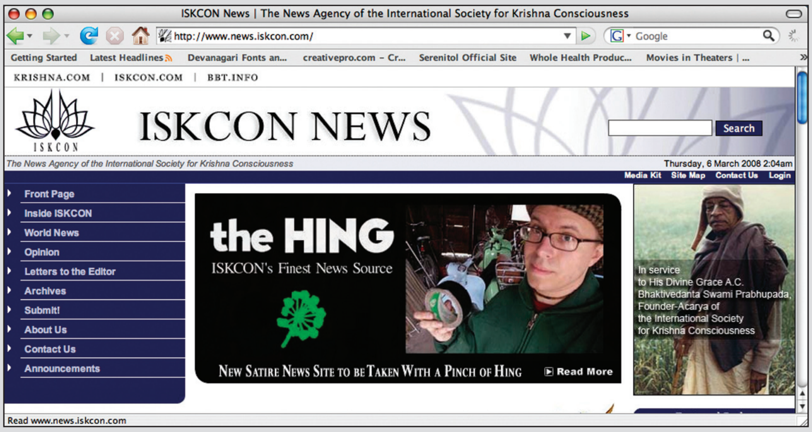
LOOKING FOR NEWS OF THE HARE KṚṢṆA MOVEMENT?

Log on to www.news.iskcon.com.

The Internet is the ideal place for timely news, and news.iskcon.com, run by ISKCON Communications, maintains an active news page. So whether you want to see what's happening in ISKCON or have some news to report, log on to www.news.iskcon.com.

e-Krishna

Profiles of Kṛṣṇa-related websites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Thursday, 6 March 2008 2:04am

ISKCON's Finest News Source

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to His Divine Grace A.C.
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WE INTERRUPT THIS ARTICLE TO BRING YOU THE TRANCENDENTAL NEWS!

Now you can get news of the Hare Kṛṣṇa community around the world by logging on. Here are two relevant sites.

News.iskcon.com—Site editor Ekendra Dāsa says that the aim of ISKCON News is to provide reliable, balanced, and well-written stories of interest to Hare Kṛṣṇa members, friends, and the inquisitive.

Also accompanying the timely news stories and opinion pieces are photos and audio and video recordings.

If you have a news story you want to contribute, just use the Submit button on the site—"We consider a good story one that's accurate and of interest to our readers," Ekendra says. "And I always like a good photo to go with an article."

ISKCON News came into being in 2007 after Mukunda Goswami and others began talking about the need for a general ISKCON news site.

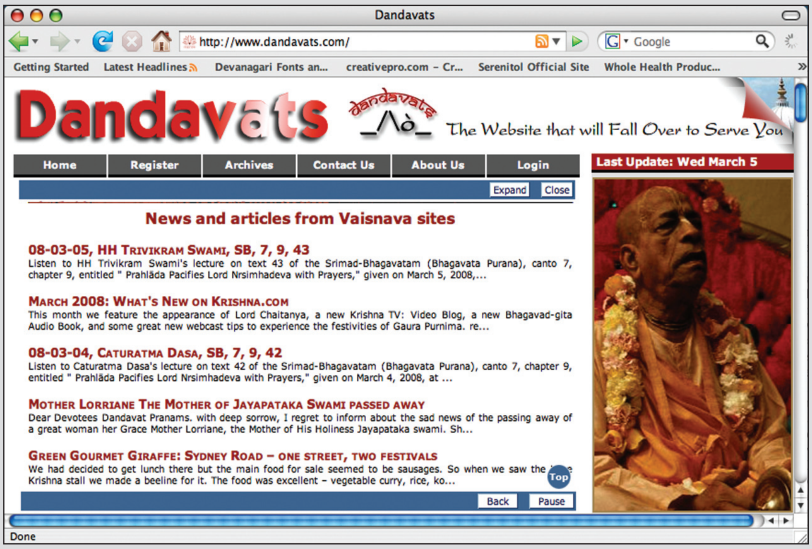
Dandavats.com—This is another good source for news, dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and information related to Kṛṣṇa conscious vision, activities, and developments worldwide.

Dandavats.com's editorial policy: "Our desire is to promote the development of Krishna bhakti, to nurture well-informed thought, and to support sustainable bonds between devotees engaged in all varieties of services and social relationships." Readers can log in and leave comments about the articles published.

Dandavats tries to keep everyone updated and connected by publishing interesting and inspiring reports on the activities of Vaisnavas around the world. To submit a story to Dandavats, click on the Contact Us button.

Here's a handy Internet tip: If you log on to news.google.com and type Hare Krishna into the search box, you can browse the news you are interested in from around the world.

—*Antony Brennan*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MOTHER LORRIANE THE MOTHER OF JAYAPATAKA SWAMI PASSED AWAY
Dear Devotees Dandavat Pranams. with deep sorrow, I regret to inform about the sad news of the passing away of a great woman her Grace Mother Lorriane, the Mother of His Holiness Jayapataka swami. Sh...

GREEN GOURMET GIRAFFE: SYDNEY ROAD – ONE STREET, TWO FESTIVALS
We had decided to get lunch there but the main food for sale seemed to be sausages. So when we saw the Krishna stall we made a beeline for it. The food was excellent – vegetable curry, rice, ko...

---

sarva-dharmān parityajya
mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja
ahaṁ tvāṁ sarva-pāpebhyo
mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ

"Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender unto Me. I shall deliver you from all sinful reactions. Do not fear." [Bg. 18.66]

It is not possible that we can give up sinful activities by our own endeavor, because in this age, Kali-yuga, everyone is addicted to some sinful activities. But if we surrender to Kṛṣṇa as He is instructing—fully, without any reservation—He will help us to become free from the sinful reactions. ❀

Paving the Way On Unpaved Roads

In British Columbia, Canada, some Hare Kṛṣṇa neo-pioneers work to materialize an important aspect of Śrīla Prabhupāda's vision.

by Yogīnātha Dāsa

Saranagati

Viśākhā Devī Dāsī

Some residents of Saranagati Village (from left): Haripriyā, Gopāla, Yamuna Devi (author of Lord Krishna's Cuisine*), and the author's twin daughters, Kalāvatī (left) and Rāsamaṇḍala. At left: canoeing on Saranagati Lake.*

VANAMĀLĪ seldom walks. Like most six-year-olds, she skips, spins, stoops, and joggles as she travels through her world on the trails and dirt roads of Saranagati Village in remote British Columbia. Her numerous trips, and those of others before her, have worn bare the path through the pine and fir forest from home to school.

Vanamālī Dāsī's name means "servant of Kṛṣṇa, who wears beautiful forest flowers." She is a member of ISKCON's "third generation," children of the children of Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciples. She was born at home in Saranagati Village and is now being schooled there. The imprints of the devotees living here have formed the path she uses—shortcuts between houses, from houses to the temple, and to other special places in the forest like "the red bridge."

Twenty years ago there were no trails. The valley now known

Rādhāpriyā Higgins

as Saranagati was once a summer hunting ground for native Indians. In the 1930s Chinese immigrants tried to raise cabbages and potatoes there. Then, in 1987, fueled by a passion to fulfill Śrīla Prabhupāda's desire for *varṇāśrama,* a group of devotees from Vancouver pooled their money and made a down payment on the land.

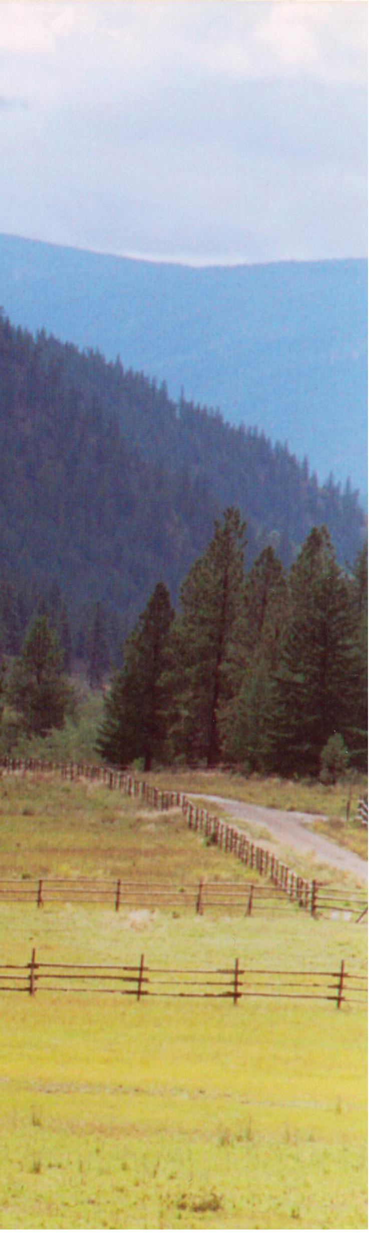
There were no homes, and there was no running water or electricity. There were a few deeply rutted roads, some broken gray fences from another age, and two thousand acres of raw, slightly rocky, alkaline landscape surrounded by trees. There was no good reason to think this land could support a *varṇāśrama* village. In fact, there was no known history of human settlement on the land. Yet it was here that neo-pioneers like Vanamālī's grandparents, citing slogans of self-sufficiency and simple living, decided to build our model community.

Unlike European pilgrims who reached their New World armed with physical fortitude and basic survival skills, the only skill I could bring from my childhood in the suburbs of Seattle and two years of college was how to strike a match. In 1987, abandoning all logic and common sense, I and others equally unprepared filled pick-up trucks with a few hand tools, some second-hand windows, and miscellaneous other implements. We then ventured blindly, foolishly, and enthusiastically into the cold and barren northland known now as Saranagati, burning with enthusiasm to serve our guru and his movement.

Prabhupāda's Vision

Before his passing, Śrīla Prabhupāda spoke often about *varṇāśrama-dharma,* the Vedic social system designed to help everyone make gradual spiritual progress. It was clearly a spoke in

Saranagati has plenty of space for horseback riding (left). Gopal the ox (below) transports Madana Mohana Dāsa and his daughter Sītā down a peaceful Saranagati road. At bottom, Haripriyā (foreground) and Rāsamaṇḍala, like other children growing up at Saranagati, have time to develop their equestrian skills, useful for getting around the village.



Viśākhā Devī Dāsī (3)

the wheel of his missionary scheme.

"Our duty is that we shall arrange the external affairs also so nicely that one day they will come to the spiritual platform very easily, paving the way. . . . Vaiṣṇava is not so easy. The *varṇāśrama-dharma* should be established to become a Vaiṣṇava. It is not so easy to become Vaiṣṇava. (Śrīla Prabhupāda, Māyāpur, India, 2/14/77)

Although none of us could precisely describe a "*varṇāśrama* community," we felt certain of this: A band of well-intentioned devotees with a mandate to be Kṛṣṇa conscious turned loose in the British Columbia wilderness, with private ownership of their homes and a share of the surrounding land, would in time manifest *varṇāśrama*. It was similar to tossing a handful of corn seeds into an abandoned, uncultivated field in the spring and returning in the fall hoping to collect a harvest—a useless technique I once tried.

What did happen?

Carrying five-gallon buckets of water down sloping icy driveways was a little disheartening after a lifetime of turning on faucets. Lying on your back in cold mud to fasten heavy metal chains onto the wheels of a truck stuck in a gooey road seemed more like stupid living than simple living. Clawing in the dirt to produce a few carrots and potatoes rather than going to the grocery store seemed like a waste of time. And spending a day in the forest cutting and loading firewood was so much harder on the back than flicking a thermostat.

I can still taste the sorry disappointment of planting my first spinach crop by squishing the seeds four inches into the soil—not knowing that I was sending them to a world of eternal darkness.

Despite these and countless other struggles, Saranagati still exists.

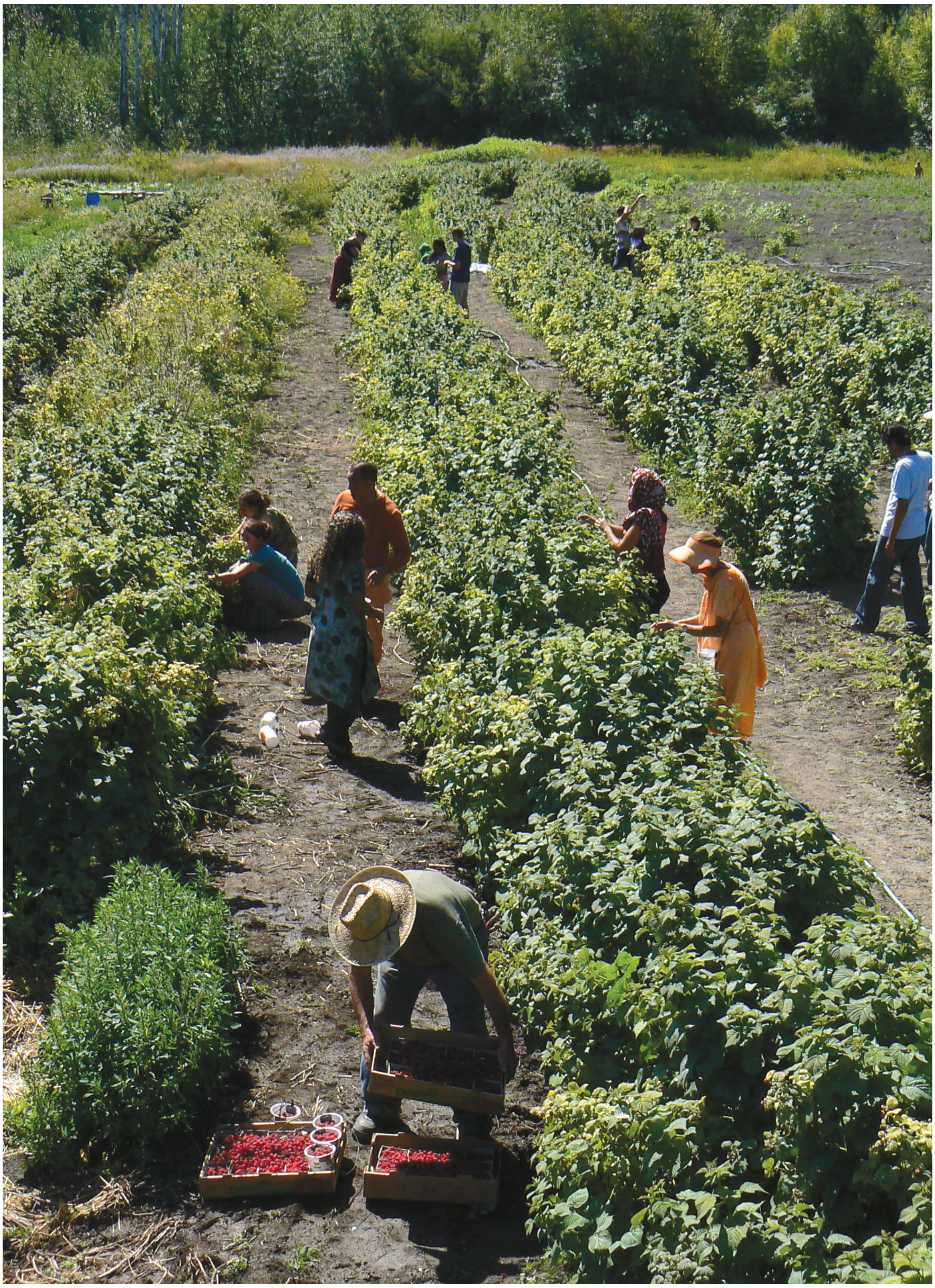
Was there a miraculous transformation of the landscape? By perseverance and the grace of God did the devotees turn a desert into Indraprastha, a heaven-on-earth,

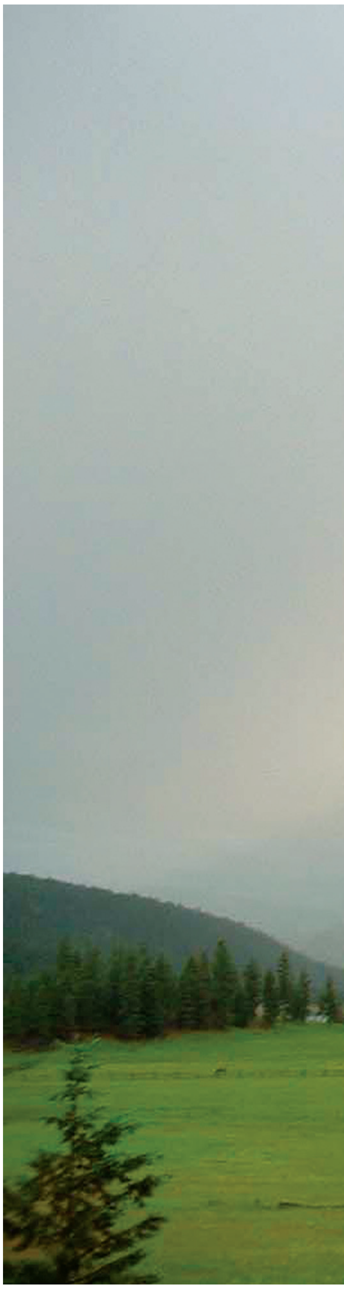
Lord Caitanya and Lord Nityānanda (right) preside over the village from their temple, sometimes used as a classroom for traditional devotional dance (below). (Lord Jagannātha, seen in the photo, is visiting for a festival.) At right, Kalāvatī (left) and Haripriyā pick wildflowers for the deities.

Viśākhā Devī Dāsī (3)

Signs of Saranagati seasons: winter sledding, summer raspberry picking, and a rainbow after a spring shower.

Viśākhā Devī Dāsī (3)





a glorious victory against all odds? Not exactly. We did establish gardens, a school, a temple, and twenty-five houses, ranging from rustic to elegant. And the happiness of our new life in the mountains somehow managed to win our hearts.

There is a primal satisfaction in being able to open your front door any time of the day or night and shout, “Jaya Rādhe-Śyāma!” as loud as you wish without fear of censure from neighbors.

It is a relief to know that commuting to work means walking to the raspberry patch. Sleeping in rhythm with the seasons instead of the clock just seems right. Crystal-clear night skies with stars that blaze soothe the mind. The sprightly singing of birds has replaced the deafening groan of a giant urban machine.

These little pleasures made the burdens of “living without” seem trivial. But what about our original mandate? What about our mission? Have we established *varṇāśrama*? Have we come any closer to understanding what it is? Have we satisfied the desires of our Guru Mahārāja?

A Symbolic Past

If *varṇāśrama* requires kings and *brāhmaṇas* and is supposed to funnel *gṛhasthas* into the renounced order, then we have failed. And if *varṇāśrama* is meant to be a re-creation of an ancient social system with well-ordered divisions of work, then again we have failed. On the other hand, if the spirit of *varṇāśrama* is to create a simple, unadorned way of life that supports God consciousness rather than constantly challenging it; and if *varṇāśrama* is intended to offer

Former residents Kartāmāsa and Rādhā Kuṇḍa (below), now living in Florida, were married in Saranagati, where they visit regularly and run an annual summer camp for children.

Viśākhā Devī Dāsī (3)

Amṛta leads the children in kīrtana *(left). Above: Rathayātrā at Saranagati Lake.*

a stable, secure, and unhurried environment, a place where, as Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura puts it, "spiritual life can be executed easily and automatically" (*Kalpataru,* Song 13), then Vanamālī's trail and the twenty-first-century village of Saranagati deserve a second look.

A well-worn path trod by three generations of the same devotee family certainly symbolizes stability. We don't yet know if Vanamālī and her playmates will live up to the prophecy of being the first true Western Vaiṣṇavas, but at least we have planted the seeds, and they have sprouted.

These children have not been tossed in the uncultivated fields of an impersonal institution or squished deep into the soil of gross materialism and electronic diversion. They are growing in the fertile land of Saranagati, where they can run free and breathe the fresh air. Here they come home to garden vegetables and *kīrtana.* Their neighbors all wear *tilaka* and neck beads.

Time will tell if this is in fact the beginning of *varṇāśrama* as Śrīla Prabhupāda desired it. Today, Saranagati is a wonderful place to pursue the inner life of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. And if nothing else, if one day Vanamālī's children joyfully walk their mother's trail, then a rare and precious forest flower may have indeed sprouted from the rocky Saranagati soil. ❁

Yogīnātha Dāsa, his wife Udārakīrtī Devī Dāsī, and their three daughters live in a house made of straw, sticks, and stones in Saranagati Village, where they have successfully survived the Canadian winters since 1991.

GLOBAL ECOLOGY

(*continued from page 36*)

whale, tomorrow the black panda, the next day the green rainforests. His motives are tainted with personal bias. To save the ozone layer he may agree to slaughter cows that release methane that supposedly burns holes in the ozone, but to safeguard his enjoyment he tolerates rapid industrialization that causes far greater damage. He has no understanding of the universal law of karma, no realization of responsibility, and no willingness to accept a simpler life. His approach is simply a Band-Aid solution: It makes an attractive picture but fails to treat the deeper malady.

Once a former Indian union minister for the environment, an active environmentalist, met an ISKCON leader at an airport lounge.

"ISKCON is such a large organization," she said, "but what is it doing to clean the environment?"

"We are trying to clean the internal environment of the heart," the leader replied. "Even if by some means you were to clean the global ecology, because the hearts of the masses are contaminated by greed and lust that contamination will soon pollute the planet again. But when the environment of the heart is cleansed by sincerely chanting the names of God, a person is no longer party to the disruption of global ecology."

A pure internal environment means pleasing Lord Kṛṣṇa, which is like watering the root of a thirsty tree: It solves the problem.

Murāri Gupta Dāsa is a disciple of His Holiness Rādhānātha Swami. He has Bachelor's degrees in medicine and surgery (M.B.B.S) and serves full-time at ISKCON Chowpatty. He is part of the production team of the Hindi and the India English editions of BTG. He also teaches Kṛṣṇa consciousness to college students in Mumbai.

HARE KṚṢṆA
HARE KṚṢṆA
KṚṢṆA KṚṢṆA
HARE HARE
HARE RĀMA
HARE RĀMA
RĀMA RĀMA
HARE HARE

PRONUNCIATION:
ha-ray, krish-na, ra-ma (rhymes with "drama")

EKRISHNA HARE KRISH
SHNA KRISHNA HARE HA
ARE RAMA HARE RAMA
AMA RA
NO STANDING ANYTIME
THE PLA

Yamarāja Dāsa

The International Society for Krishna Consciousness

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Coventry, England — Kingfield Rd., Coventry (mail: 19 Gloucester St., Coventry CV1 3BZ)/ Tel. +44 (024) 7655 2822 or 5420/ haridas.kds@pamho.net
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You *Can* Get There from Here

"WHERE ARE YOU coming from?" That's the first question you're likely to ask someone who's phoning for directions to your home. Before you can begin to help, you have to know where the inquirer is now. Similarly, when spiritual teachers direct us toward our spiritual goal, it helps them to know exactly where we're coming from.

While it's true that Lord Kṛṣṇa and Lord Caitanya give directions for everyone, in any situation, not everyone has faith in those directions or is willing to follow them in earnest. That's why Kṛṣṇa has agents in this world. Their service to Kṛṣṇa is to convince others of the truth of Kṛṣṇa's teachings and then guide them in applying the teachings to their lives.

Those who accept the service of guiding others in spiritual life take on a profound responsibility. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī and other authorities in Lord Caitanya's line warn that a guru should not accept many disciples, because even among persons qualified to lead others to Kṛṣṇa, only a few rare souls can effectively lead thousands. Such pure souls can inspire many people because, as *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* tells us, Lord Kṛṣṇa directly empowers them to do so.

We disciples and followers of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda see in him the qualities and accomplishments of a directly empowered soul. Many who heard him speak felt he was speaking specifically to them, even when addressing a large audience. His books touched the hearts of millions.

Śrīla Prabhupāda knew where the lost souls of his time were coming from: We're all victims of our spiritually depressed age. But we're individuals too, and Prabhupāda had to work with that reality, and he did. He didn't just reach one kind of person; he was able to connect with everyone from students and dropouts to businessmen, scholars, and scientists. Though thousands were beginning (or continuing) their journey from all variety of "places," his directions moved them all forward toward the goal of loving God.

There's an old story about a city slicker who gets lost in the countryside. When he tells a farmer where he wants to go and asks for directions, the farmer says, "Well, you can't get there from here!"

The humor in the farmer's remark lies in the fact that you can, of course, get anywhere from anywhere—you just might have to travel a lot and follow many directions. The old farmer, it seems, didn't want to be bothered by having to give complicated directions.

Fortunately for us, Prabhupāda had no such reservations. He explained and explained and explained. He knew us well, and he knew we were slow learners. It didn't help that the bad directions we'd received from others (getting us more lost in the countryside) had turned many of us into skeptics.

Prabhupāda knew that despite our endless list of spiritual negatives, we could "get there from here." He sailed for America to deliver Kṛṣṇa's message even when most Kṛṣṇa devotees from his country viewed people in the West as a lost cause. Prabhupāda knew that originally we all come from the same place: the spiritual world. His directions are not, therefore, meant to lead us to a new place. They're just meant to show us how to get back home.

—*Nāgarāja Dāsa*

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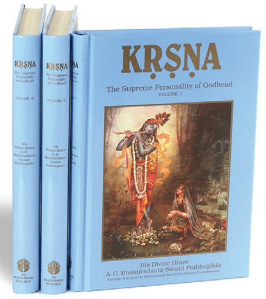

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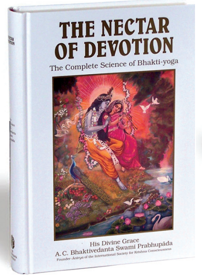

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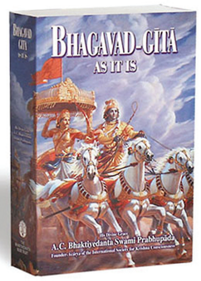

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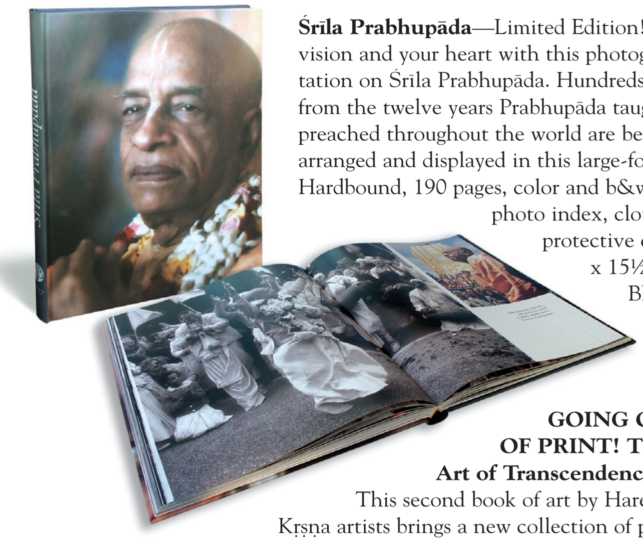

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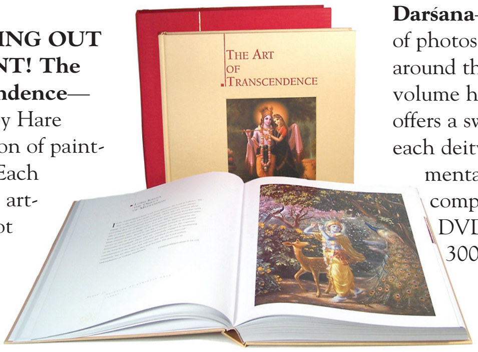

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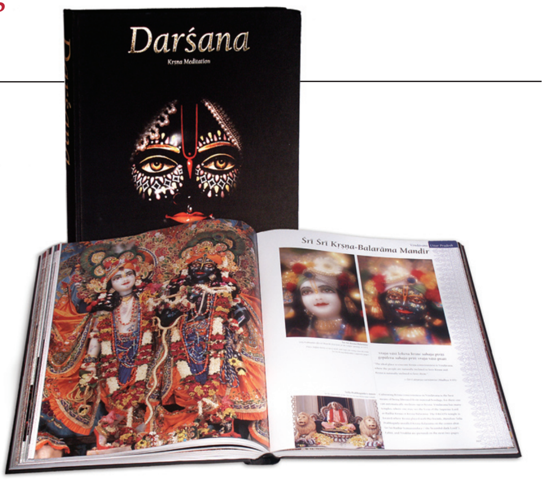

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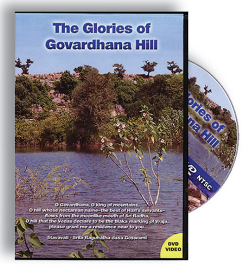

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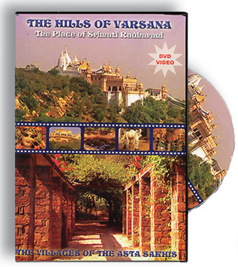

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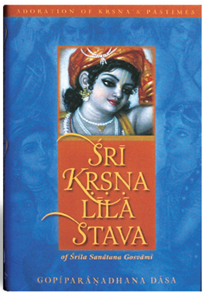

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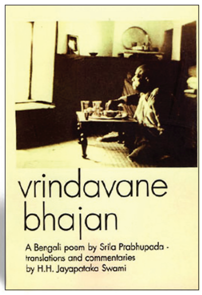

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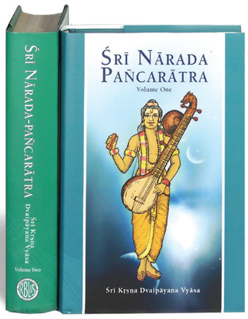

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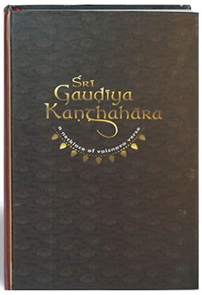

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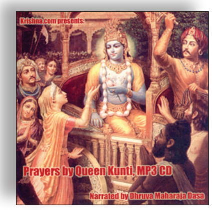

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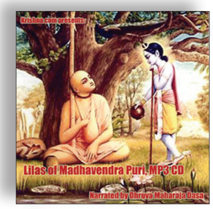

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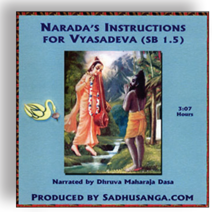

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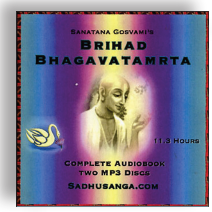

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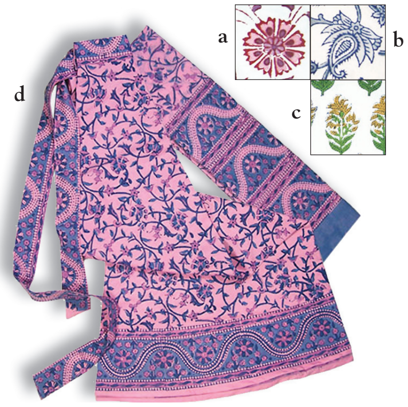

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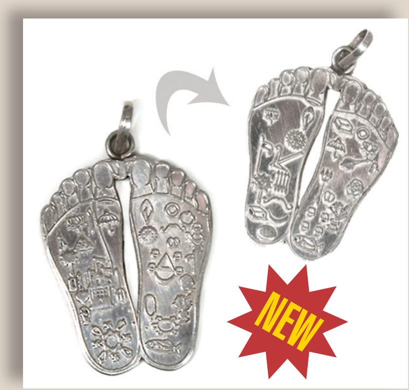

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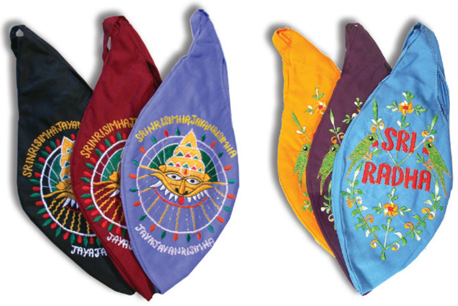

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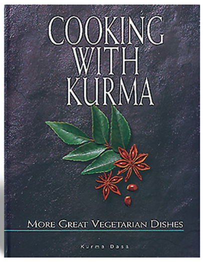

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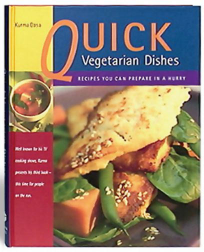

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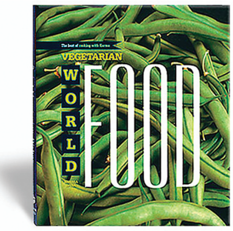

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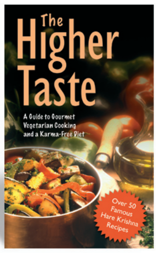

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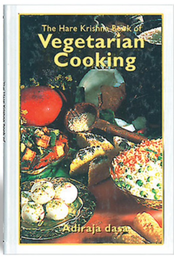

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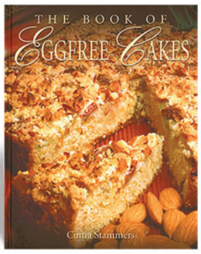

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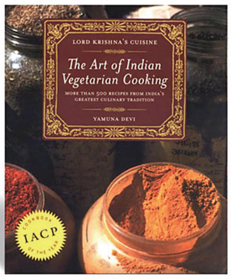

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VEDIC THOUGHTS

The word *hari* conveys various meanings, but the chief import of the word is that He (the Lord) vanquishes everything inauspicious and takes away the mind of the devotee by awarding pure transcendental love. By remembering the Lord in acute distress one can be free from all varieties of miseries and anxieties. Gradually the Lord vanquishes all obstacles on the path of devotional service of a pure devotee, and the result of nine devotional activities, such as hearing and chanting, becomes manifested.

His Divine Grace
A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.7.10, Purport

Though engaged in all kinds of activities, My pure devotee, under My protection, reaches the eternal and imperishable abode by My grace.

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa
Bhagavad-gītā 18.56

To taste the fruit of devotional service in Goloka Vṛndāvana is the highest perfection of life, and in the presence of such perfection, the four material perfections—religion, economic development, sense gratification, and liberation—are very insignificant achievements.

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu
Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya 19.164

Who can be worthy of the name of the Supreme Lord but the Personality of Godhead Śrī Kṛṣṇa? Brahmājī collected the water emanating from the nails of His feet in order to award it to Lord Śiva as a worshipful welcome. This very water [the Ganges] is purifying the whole universe, including Lord Śiva.

Śukadeva Gosvāmī
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.18.21

Give up the company of evil persons, partake of the association of saintly persons, perform pious deeds both day and night, and remember always the flickering nature of the material world.

Cāṇakya Paṇḍita

Deluded by ignorance, bewildered souls think themselves steady and wise. Baffled by their own conceit, they set themselves up as scholars and thus lead other ignorant souls further into darkness. In this way, those blinded by ignorance lead similarly blind men into the darkness of oblivion.

Kaṭha Upaniṣad 1.2.5

Lord Kṛṣṇa, the cowherd, transcends not only the material consciousness of wakefulness, dream, and deep sleep, but also the fourth realm of pure, spiritual awareness.

Gopāla-tapanī Upaniṣad (*Uttara* 96)

The infinite world of spiritual bliss is called Vaikuṇṭha. There the Supreme Truth lives, being glorified by the personified *Vedas,* who are also present there.

Bṛhad-vāmana Purāṇa

Festival Of India 2008

Schedule for North America

May 24–26: Cleveland Rathayātrā
May 30–June 1: Baltimore Rathayātrā
June 6–8: Atlanta Panihati Chipped-Rice Festival
June 14: New York City Rathayātrā
June 21: Chicago or Newark, New Jersey, Rathayātrā
June 28: Detroit Rathayātrā
July 4: Washington, D.C., Rathayātrā
July 6: Queens, New York, Rathayātrā
July 12–13: Montreal Rathayātrā
July 19–20: Toronto Rathayātrā
July 27: San Francisco Rathayātrā
August 3: Los Angeles Rathayātrā
August 9–10: Vancouver Rathayātrā
August 23–24: Vancouver Janmāṣṭamī & Vyāsa Pūjā
August 30–31: Edmonton Rathayātrā
September 6: Calgary Rathayātrā
September 13: Philadelphia Rathayātrā
October 11: Washington, D.C., Rāma Vijayotsava

IMPORTANT NOTE: Some of these dates are not yet confirmed. Before scheduling your travel, be sure to confirm the festival dates with the ISKCON temple in the city where the festival is to be held. Or email Festival of India: mdasa@earthlink.net.